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THE LIFE OF CHRIST

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

A HISTORICAL, CRITICAL, AND APOLOGETIC EXPOSITION

BY

THE REV. L. C. FILLION, S.S.

CONSULTOR OF THE BIBLICAL COMMISSION

TRANSLATED BY

THE REV. NEWTON THOMPSON, S.T.D.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I was asked to write this book many years ago,—twenty-five at least. But at that time I had other labors under way which I had to complete first. As soon as I was free to do so, I went to work on this project, the thought of which had been almost constantly in my mind, and which pleased me the more inasmuch as a considerable part of my scriptural ministry had been devoted to explaining the Gospels, both orally and in writing. But the publisher suggested that I first prepare a Life of Christ in simpler form, freed from all scientific apparatus and suited to all classes of society. I gladly complied with that wish and wrote a small volume entitled *Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ d'après les Évangiles,* which has been kindly received both in France and abroad.

I then resumed the plan of a scientific Life of Our Lord and devoted five full and happy years to carrying out the project. The small work just mentioned cleared the way, so to speak, because I had so conceived it and planned its progress that I could take it as a basis of further researches and develop its pages in order.

Yet I asked myself this question: Does a new Life of Our Lord answer a real need, since we have plenty of such lives, some of recent date, composed by distinguished theologians and authors, which for a long time to come will enjoy a well-deserved success? I put this question to competent, reliable men and received the answer that there would never be enough Lives of Our Lord Jesus Christ, because we shall never sufficiently know the Person, work, and teaching of the God-Man. And it was also said that, while in certain respects my book would be similar to the works of Abbé Fouard, Bishop Le

AUG 30 1982

Camus, and Father Didon—to mention a few of the most widely known—yet it would have distinct peculiarities, calculated to open certain new horizons, which would give it its *raison d'être.*

This resemblance and these peculiarities will be made clear by a short explanation of our subtitle: Historical, critical, and apologetic exposition.

Historical exposition. This phase of the work was relatively easy, since in the four Gospels we have first-class documents which, century after century, and particularly in our own day, have been commented on and elucidated from every angle, so that one has only to follow them and develop them in order to have an authentic portrait of Christ, nay, even His biography, in the broader sense of that term. That our exposition might be fully historical, we have endeavored, much more than in the volume *Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ d'après les Évangiles,* to set our Lord in the environment where He was born and lived. The Evangelists well understood that it was incumbent on them to write the Master's life from this special viewpoint: hence the brief but substantial notes regarding the religious, social, and political conditions of Palestine at the time of their divine Hero, the geography, archæology, and other like points, which they have strewn through their narratives. In fact, while belonging to the whole world and to all ages, Jesus was truly, if we may be allowed to say so, the Man of His country and His times; whence it follows that His human Personality is much better understood, and we shall picture it to ourselves in a much more lifelike manner, if we look at it in its original surroundings, in the different scenes that He honored by His holy presence and marvelous activity. For this reason we deemed it indispensable to devote two chapters of the first part to a rather extensive, though relatively summary, study of the country and the nation to which our Lord deigned to attach Himself so closely. Furthermore,

in the course of the work, we have frequently inserted more or less detailed notes for the purpose of presenting Christ's physiognomy and the details of his surroundings in a more concrete form. For this same reason we have introduced, near the end of the first volume, between the Hidden Life and the Public Life, a special study, bearing on Christ's human nature, based on the Gospel data. To-day there is great interest in this particular aspect of the Person of the Incarnate Word; and the better we become acquainted with it, the more its charms win our affection.

Critical exposition. In our day, more than ever, it is needful that a Life of Christ have this character if it claims to be scientific. We have, therefore, according to circumstances, employed "textual" criticism in ascertaining the text of the Gospels in its purest form; "literary" criticism, in proving, at the outset of our first volume, the authenticity, integrity, and credibility of these precious documents; "real" criticism, in explaining the contents of these same documents to the best of our ability and in utilizing for that purpose all the resources furnished by the exegesis of to-day.

This criticism, pursued judiciously as regards matters of faith, St. Peter recommended to the early Christians, when he wrote to them: "With modesty and fear" you should be "ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh you a reason of the hope which is in you." [1] It is of no less importance to-day that educated Catholics should be able to give an account of their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Gospels describe Him, with His supernatural birth, His miracles, His teaching, His divinity. For them especially, the simple faith of the untutored will no longer do. Origen [2] admirably develops this thought when he says that in considering Christ's history

[1] 1 Peter 3:15.

[2] We find this reference, but without direct citation, in F. Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, 5th ed., p. viii.

as set forth in the Gospels, he does not invite the ablest and most ingenious inquirers to be satisfied with a simple and unreasoning faith, but rather wishes to prove that whoever desires to study it, needs an honest and circumspect mind and a spirit of earnest inquiry and must, so to speak, penetrate the author's intention so as to ascertain the purpose of each event there narrated. In all truth we can say that it has been our constant endeavor to follow this important rule.

Apologetic exposition, or what amounts almost to the same thing, *polemic exposition.* In recent times, as our readers know, the Holy Gospels and Our Lord's sacred Person have been the object of violent and constantly repeated assaults. And so it has seemed to us that it would not be amiss to point out these attacks and reply to them. In this respect perhaps, more than any other, the present work differs from those preceding it. Providence has permitted that, for a number of years, we have had to study thoroughly the enormous mass of books written about Our Lord and the Gospels by Rationalists of all shades of opinion. The general result of this study we have set forth in two small volumes, *L'Évangile Mutilé et Dénaturé par les Rationalistes Contemporains* (1909) and *Les Étapes du Rationalisme dans ses attaques contre les Évangiles et la Vie de N.-S. Jésus-Christ* (1910).[3] But therein we merely examined in their ensemble these false theories and their unfortunately growing dominance. In the present work we enter into details and observe Rationalism in its efforts to destroy the Gospel episodes one after the other. Prompted by a desire to conduct our polemical treatment with utmost fairness, we habitually state the objections of these foes of the Christian faith in their own words. Of course, we are able to consider only the principal ones; even at that, they take us rather far afield, especially in our first volume, which is largely

[3] See Fillion, *Les Miracles de N.-S. Jésus-Christ,* 2 vols., Paris, 1911.

devoted to the accounts of the holy Infancy, every last bit of which the critics would like to destroy.

Often the difficulties raised by the critics solve themselves, thanks simply to the natural explanation of the Gospel texts and to the obviously erroneous and arbitrary character of the meaning which they seek to attach to them. Ordinarily, however, we have adhered to the plan of following the objections in their various meanderings, and the reader will, we hope, readily see that they do not withstand a genuine investigation of the facts.

We scarcely need to say that we wage war only on errors, never on persons. Yet, in the long run, it is not without effort that a Catholic heart is able to conceal the pain it feels upon observing, at each Gospel event, the treatment inflicted on what is the dearest thing in the world to him. The critics appropriated to themselves the name of "the men of Jesus," continually declaring that they have discovered "the true Jesus," "the historic Jesus," whose life and features, they say, were distorted at a very early date. In reality, it is they who distort that life and take from it not only its divinity, but nearly all its human splendor.

The effrontery with which they propose their subversive theories strikes one at the very first glance. As my revered teacher, Father Vigouroux, wrote, "One cause of the influence exercised by negative criticism is the tone of assurance with which it draws its conclusions. . . . In setting forth their views, these unbelievers say with an air of great confidence: 'Science proves, Criticism demonstrates,' and this assertion frequently takes the place of proof and demonstration. As though science were incarnate in their person! As though criticism did not exist outside the hypotheses invented by their imagination!" [4]

[4] *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., II, 651.

With this effrontery there is associated a haughty contempt for tradition, which is, however, a scientific element of the first order, when there is question of exercising a control over facts of history, in particular over the fact of the composition and value of the Gospels. The Liberal theologians also take strange liberties with the most authentic texts, rejecting and mutilating them or distorting their meaning without any reason but that of ridding themselves of bothersome witnesses. Or else they claim, always without proof and solely because of their absolute refusal to admit the supernatural, that the most remarkable Gospel facts were fabricated out of the whole cloth or at least enlarged and embellished under the influence of the enthusiastic faith of the early Christians, or of events related in the Old Testament, or even of contemporary paganism.

But we will not anticipate. Let the reader see and judge for himself. He will recognize that it is not useless, at a time when so-called liberal criticism shows itself so widespread and does so much harm, to point out its misdeeds and to refute its errors. But in order that this part of our work may not encumber and interrupt the progress of our account of the Savior's life, we have judged it fitting to put it in an Appendix at the end of each volume. We hope that our readers may not wholly neglect it, for, as we venture to repeat, to-day more than ever it behooves educated Christians to be prepared to defend their faith against the repeated attacks of the enemy. The Gospel accounts do, of course, here and there offer difficulties; but none of these is insurmountable, as a faithful and honest examination proves.

In the body of the work will be found numerous bibliographical references. Their number might easily have been increased; but we preferred to cite only those books with which we are personally acquainted, and even this number we have been glad to restrict, ordinarily limiting ourselves to mention

of the works which are, in a good or bad sense, the most conspicuous.

We here express a double regret. On the one hand, it would have been pleasing to take from our ancient Doctors who so admirably commented on the Gospels—particularly St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great—some of their pious and appealing reflections; on the other hand, to mention from time to time the commentary *sui generis,* remarkable despite its imperfections, which plastic art has given us in the course of ages, from the period of the Catacombs to our own, of a considerable part of the Gospel events. But we had to forego that pleasure so as not excessively to enlarge this work, the direct and chief aim of which, moreover, is to expound the life of the Lord Jesus scientifically. We have therefore confined ourselves to the development of the sacred text. But we appreciate, and we doubt not that our readers will equally appreciate, the truth of these words from the pen of a writer of our day who says: "The more I meditate on the Gospel, the more I comprehend all its beauty. I wish I could so fill my soul and my life with it that both might become a living preachment of it." [5] Or, as the author of the *Imitation of Christ* said long ago: *"Exerceatur servus tuus [Domine Jesu] in vita tua, quia ibi est salus mea et sanctitas vera. Quidquid extra eam lego vel audio, non me recreat nec delectat plene."* [6]

In closing, I feel the need of thanking the devoted friends who kindly helped me by their encouragement, their advice, and their prayers. May it please Our Lord Jesus Christ, the author of every perfect gift, to bestow His choicest blessings upon them! I owe a particularly tender acknowledgment to my dear, esteemed confrère Father A. Aubonnet, S.S., who showed untiring kindness in reading the two thousand pages

[5] Mme. E. Leseur, *Journal et Pensées de Chaque Jour,* 1918, p. 101.

[6] Book III, chap. 56, no. 3.

of manuscript and who died only a few weeks after giving the work his *nihil obstat.*

L. C. Fillion

Issy, Seminaire de Saint-Sulpice.

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THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART I

Sources for the Life of Christ; Geographical, Political, and Religious Environment

Since it is our purpose to proceed in a scientific manner, we must at the very outset study three preliminary questions, the importance of which is self-evident. The first question is regarding the documents we shall have to use—documents that constitute the foundation on which to base our narrative. The other two questions are interrelated and concern the conditions and environment in which Our Lord passed His life. This environment is made up of the country where He was born, grew up, carried on His ministry, and died for the salvation of mankind, and of the people or race with which He was closely connected by His human nature and His character of Messias. Hence we will, first of all, make inquiry as to the documents we must consult and their historical value; secondly, we shall have to consider what were the geographical conditions of Palestine at the period in which our Savior lived; thirdly, we will examine the political, social, and religious circumstances of the Jewish nation at that time.

CHAPTER I

The Documents

THE "sources"—a term commonly applied nowadays to those ancient written documents which supply the historian with the data he needs for studying and recounting the Life of Christ—are of a diverse character and of very unequal worth.

They fall into two distinct classes according as they are of Christian or non-Christian origin.

I. Non-Christian Documents

The rather meager sources outside of the Christian religion belong, some to Judaism and others to paganism.

1. **Jewish sources.** It is but natural that we should turn to Jewish writings, composed about the beginning of the Christian era, in our search for information regarding Christ and His history, since, as we know from other trustworthy documents, He profoundly stirred Palestine for several years by His miracles, preaching, and Messianic claims, and since, after Him, His Apostles and missionaries made His name resound through the whole length and breadth of the Jewish *Diaspora,*[7] while continuing His work and founding the Christian Church.

Let us first question the two most celebrated Jewish writers

[7] This name, from a Greek word meaning "dispersion," was given to the large number of Jews who then lived scattered in the principal cities of the different provinces of the Roman Empire. Cf. John 7:35; Acts 2:9–11; Jas. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1, etc. We shall have occasion to speak of these dispersed Jews again farther on.

of the first century of our era: the philosopher Philo and the historian Josephus.

The more remarkable of the two is *Philo Judæus,*—a representative of Alexandrian Judaism and thoroughly impregnated with Greek philosophy. In the year 40 he went to Rome as a delegate of his coreligionists at Alexandria to make complaint to Emperor Caligula against the extortions and vexations imposed on them by the Roman governor and the inhabitants of that city. Since he was at that time, according to his own statement,[8] entering upon old age, we may infer that he was born in 15 or 20 B.C. He was, therefore, a contemporary of the Savior.

It would be particularly interesting to know what opinion Philo formed of Jesus Christ. Although his writings are rather numerous, yet in them he is altogether silent on the subject. However much we may regret this silence, it is readily explained. Although it is morally impossible to suppose that Philo, on the Alexandrian shore so near and in such frequent intercourse with Palestine, had not heard of Christ, yet his knowledge was not such as to impress him vividly and lead him to mention Christ in his writings. Philo believed in the Messias, but, like so many other Jews of his time, in a political Messias, through whom the people of God would be delivered from the Roman yoke and recover a glorious independence. Under these conditions he might regard as an unimportant and a negligible enthusiast this Jesus for whom the Messianic idea belonged solely to the religious and moral realm.

We shall be more successful in consulting the historian *Flavius Josephus,* who was born in the first year of Caligula's reign (A. D. 37–38). He was a member of the Pharisee party and an earnest patriot. At first he displayed great activity in his countrymen's revolt against Rome (A. D. 66) and brilliantly did his part as a leader. He was made prisoner the next year,

[8] *Legatio ad Caium,* XXVIII.

and a little later was set at liberty by Vespasian, whose elevation to the throne he had foretold. When the war was over, he accompanied Titus to Rome, where he died in the third year of Trajan's reign (A. D. 100). His chief literary work is the *Jewish Antiquities,* written in Greek [9] and covering the entire history of Judaism from its beginning to the opening of the war with the Romans. This important work, divided into twenty books, dates from the thirteenth year of Domitian (A. D. 93–94). It is of special interest to us because it contains two passages relative to Christ.

The first and by far more important of these passages reads thus:

"*Now, there was about this time,*[10] *Jesus, a wise man,* if it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. *He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles.* He was the Christ; *and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned Him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him,* for He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him; *and the tribe of Christians, so named from Him, is not extinct at this day.*" [11]

The second text is shorter and vaguer. It refers to the death sentence of St. James the Less by the High Priest Ananus. Josephus says:

"[Ananus] assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges [12] and brought before them the brother [13] of Jesus, who was called

[9] The Greek title is Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία, "Jewish Archæology." It is translated into Latin as *Antiquitates Iudaicae,* whence the usual English title, *Jewish Antiquities.*

[10] Under the government of Pontius Pilate (27–37 A. D.). The italicized words some critics think are the only ones that existed in the original text of Josephus.

[11] *Antiq.,* XVIII, iii, 3.

[12] The supreme court of the Jews at that time.

[13] "Brother" in a broad sense, *i. e.,* a relative.

Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned." [14]

A serious question has arisen regarding these two texts: Are they genuine? Until the seventeenth century no one seems to have entertained any doubt about it. Since then, however, this point has been a matter of keen dispute, which is far from being settled.

Nevertheless, altogether aside from any party spirit, there is to-day a widespread tendency to accept the second passage as genuine and to regard the first as being interpolated, either in whole, according to some, or in part, according to others.

The proof of the interpolation rests upon two reasons the character of which can hardly be contested.

(1) The first passage quoted above from the *Antiquities* presupposes that Josephus personally regarded Jesus as the Messias. "He was the Christ," we read there in just so many words. Then the writer adds that the Prophets had long before predicted Jesus' Resurrection. But that is the language of a Christian, not of a Jew, especially not of a Jew who had become more or less of a skeptic toward his own religion.[15] Hence it does not seem that Josephus could have used such expressions. (2) Added to this intrinsic reason are external proofs that are far from being negligible. The disputed text was never cited by the earliest ecclesiastical writers, notably St. Justin, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Yet it was of priceless value for apologetics. Such silence is, therefore, an unfavorable omen for the text. Eusebius in the fourth century was the first to make use of these lines,[16] which were likewise cited by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, Cassiodorus,

[14] *Ant.*, XX, ix, 1.

[15] Origen, in his treatise against Celsus, I, 47 (see also his *Comment. in Matth.*, 10:17), expressly states that Josephus did not believe in the Messianic character of Jesus.

[16] *Hist. Eccl.*, II, 6. See also his *Demonstr. Evang.*, II, iii, 105 sq.

and others after them. It is true that all the extant Greek manuscripts contain the lines, but all do not place them in the same context. This, of course, is a somewhat unfavorable indication. Moreover, none of these manuscripts goes back very far.

These reasons make one stop to consider and justify a measure of doubt. On the basis of these arguments, many critics entirely reject the first of the two passages as apocryphal. Other weighty authors still accept its genuineness.[17] Between these two diametrically opposed views, a third opinion has been formed, enlisting support in the most diverse theological schools.[18] This opinion regards as genuine a notable part of the text, that which we have italicized in our translation, and as interpolated only such expressions as are hard to reconcile with Josephus' personal views. This opinion seems to us quite tenable. The interpolation would, then, date probably from the third century; it would be later than Origen, who was unacquainted with this text, and anterior to Eusebius, who mentions it.

There is no sound reason for attacking the genuineness of the second passage, which, moreover, has been denied by only a small number of "advanced" critics. The act that it relates is specifically Jewish, without any ornamentation that might be supposed to come from a Christian revision. The historian adding the words, "called the Christ," to designate Jesus, does so simply to specify more clearly who St. James was. Moreover, this qualifying phrase in no wise expresses

[17] See Fr. Bohle, *Flavius Josephus über Christus und die Christen*, 1896; Bishop Le Camus, *The Life of Christ*, English trans., 1906, Vol. I, p. 56. Recently several English and German Liberal theologians have discussed this question again and have declared themselves in favor of the authenticity; among others, Burkitt (*Theologische Tijdschrift*, 1913, pp. 135–144), Harnack (*Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*, 1913, no. 9), E. Barnes (*Contemporary Review*, January, 1911).

[18] Cf. G. M. Mueller, *Christus in Flavius Josephus*, 2d ed., 1895, pp. 31–43.

the personal thought of the Jewish author, but that of Christ's followers. A detail of this sort contains nothing to arouse our distrust, for it points to a purely objective fact, universally known in Palestine. And Origen, who is silent on the other text, explicitly mentions this one.[19]

If we now reread the two testimonies of Josephus referring to Christ, we must observe that they teach us absolutely nothing new. Yet we gladly welcome them, for, though proceeding from an indifferent pen, they are favorable to the Savior, and what they state is true.

Passing from Josephus to the Talmudic books, we cannot say that they contain no unpublished details about Christ. In fact, they are far from imitating the literary moderation of the celebrated historian. Here and there they do mention Jesus, but only to give vent to their hatred for the Founder of Christianity and to vilify Him.

Most of our readers know that the Talmud is a vast collection, the numerous sections of which were successively composed in Aramaic between the period of our Savior's life and the close of the fifth century. It is made up of two parts: the *Mishna,* or "Repetition" of the Mosaic Law, completed about A. D. 220, and the *Gemara,* which is an exposition of the *Mishna.* It is especially in the *Gemara* that mention is made of Jesus, in the tractates on the Sabbath and the Sanhedrin. In the passages referring to Him, He is at times designated by His personal name, *Jeshu* (abbreviation for *Jeshua*), to which is sometimes added the epithet *ha-Notseri,* "of Nazareth"; in other passages He is called by the extremely insulting sobriquet *Ben-Pandera,* "son of Pandera," and *Ben-Stada,* "son of Stada." The words Stada and Pandera designate, respectively, His mother and some man supposed to have seduced her by taking advantage of her trustfulness. In other places the Talmud calls the mother of Jesus by her true name,

[19] *Contra Celsum,* I, 47.

Miriam, representing her as a hair-dresser, the while admitting that she was descended from a line of princes. At times the Talmudists also assign a royal origin to Jesus. They speak of His flight into Egypt, but add that He thus temporarily exiled Himself to hide His illegitimate birth. In that land of clever sorcerers, He is supposed to have acquired a knowledge of magic, with the help of which, after His return to Palestine, He succeeded in winning the populace by performing numerous prodigies. He thus led a multitude of His fellow-Jews into sin. He explicitly taught heresy and turned the words of the wise into ridicule. He went so far as to call Himself God. He was excommunicated and finally arrested, tried as a seducer and apostate, condemned to death, and stoned on the eve of the Passover. Then His body was hanged or crucified. For forty days before His trial a herald officially invited all who could say anything in His favor to come before the judges without fear. But no one appeared. It was Pontius Pilate who carried out the sentence. Jesus was thirty-three years old when He died. His soul went directly to Gehenna, there to undergo torments. He had several intimate disciples.

Such is a summary of what the Talmud has to say about Jesus.[20] It is not without interest to note the general likeness which this sketch—barring the coarse calumnies—bears to the Gospel narratives, which the Jewish writers simply altered and distorted in a way to form an apology for their nation.[21]

[20] For more complete details see R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash,* 1904; the article *"Christ in Jewish Literature"* by the same author, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels,* II, 876–878; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen,* pp. 452–486.

[21] There is no need to consider here the writing entitled *Toledoth Yeshu,* "The Generations (*i. e.,* history) of Jesus." Traces of it are to be found in the ninth century. It made some little stir during and after the Middle Ages. Samuel Krauss, a German Jew, has seen fit to republish it under the title, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen,* 1902. This ignoble pamphlet, by a development of the Talmudic calumnies, treats of the birth of Christ, His public life, His death, and the origin of the Christian Church. The details would be ridiculous if they were not so

From this short summary, certain items of which we have mentioned with the greatest repugnance, we see what a wretched source the Talmud would make if one were to consult it for writing a Life of Christ. But from the archæological point of view it can render useful service in helping us to a better understanding of the conditions in which our Savior's life was passed.

2. **Pagan sources.** Will the pagan sources of the first and second century afford better results? *A priori* it would seem unlikely. However, our inquiries in this direction will not be entirely fruitless, although they will likewise be only negative.

Two illustrious apologists, St. Justin[22] and Tertullian,[23] affirm that in the Roman archives there existed two official reports from Pontius Pilate, telling of Christ's condemnation and crucifixion. It is scarcely probable that they saw these documents with their own eyes; but they may have heard them spoken of or, for good reasons, supposed their existence.[24]

At least we do possess, with regard to Our Lord, the testimony of three great Roman authors who wrote at the beginning of the second century: Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius. Of course, such authors, imbued with prejudices against the Christians, cannot be expected to portray

revolting. Professor H. Laible published a short refutation of these infamies, in a pamphlet, *Jesus Christus im Talmud,* 1891, 2d ed., 1900. In our own days several Jewish writers, who have studied Christ in the Gospels, unhesitatingly express their admiration for Him. See R. T. Herford, in Hastings' *Dictionary,* II, pp. 881 f.; De le Roi, *Neujüdische Stimmen über Jesus Christus,* 1910; cfr. G. Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism,* 1912, pp. 317–319. Nevertheless, the great mass of the Israelite nation still shows indifference or hatred toward Jesus. Cf. L. C. Fillion, *Les Étapes du Rationalisme . . .* , 1911, pp. 269 f.

[22] *Apol.,* I, 35, 48.

[23] *Apol.,* V, 21.

[24] The apocryphal writings known as *Acta Pilati* and the *Letter of Pilate to Emperor Claudius* are a clumsy attempt to reproduce these reports. See Brunet, *Les Évangiles Apocryphes Traduits et Annotés,* 2d ed., pp. 215–273; Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha,* 1853, pp. 413–425; Thilo, *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti,* I, 801–813.

Christ in ideal colors. But they will at least show us what was thought of Him in the official circles to which they belonged.

Plinius Caecilius, better known as *Pliny the Younger,* a nephew of Pliny the Elder, was born A. D. 62 or 63. He was consul (A. D. 100) under Trajan and had the good fortune to become a close friend of that ruler, who sent him to Bithynia with the title of imperial legate. He filled that high office from 111 to 113. The spread of Christianity had been very rapid in Bithynia, and the religion of Christ inflicted the gravest harm on pagan worship. Disturbed by this state of affairs, the legate made an investigation as to the Christians, their religious ceremonies, and their practices. The remarkable report which he sent to Trajan,[25] and the Emperor's brief reply,[26] furnish us with information of the greatest interest concerning the condition of the Christian churches in Bithynia at the beginning of the second century. It will suffice to note the following particulars: (1) The Christians had become so numerous in that province that the pagan temples were beginning to be deserted and the solemnities established in honor of the false gods were partly abandoned; (2) The new worship was, on the contrary, perfectly organized. The Christians met together for their devotions on fixed days in the morning. Christ was the center of worship; in His honor canticles were sung which attributed a divine nature to Him (*"carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem"*). These last words are the most important, for they prove that at that time, as during the Apostolic age, as even to-day, the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ was an essential doctrine among Christians.

The testimony of *Tacitus,* although several years later than that of Pliny the Younger, shows us the Savior's followers in Rome itself, at the time of Nero's reign (A. D. 54–68). This noted historian, who always follows the best docu-

[25] See Book X of his Letters; *Epist.,* XCVII, ed. Lemaire, 1823, pp. 197–201.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 201.

ments and gives evidence of a strict critical judgment, likewise held administrative offices under Trajan. Between the years 115 and 117 he published his *Annales,* in which, with an exactitude and conciseness that has often been highly praised, he narrates the chief events in the reigns of the Emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (A. D. 14–68). He devotes a number of lines to Christ and the Christians in the matter of the terrible fire which destroyed a considerable part of Rome in the year 64. Nero himself was the author of that conflagration and public opinion was not slow in fixing the responsibility on him. To acquit himself of the charge, he even dared to cast the odium of this crime on the Christians. After mentioning these details, Tacitus goes on, by way of describing the Christians: "Chrestus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow, from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged." [27]

These lines bear testimony in plainest terms to the condemnation of Christ by Pontius Pilate and to the fact, set forth as a matter well known to all, that at the time of Nero the Christians, then numerous in Palestine, throughout the Empire, and even at Rome, attached themselves to Christ as the Founder of their religion.

Suetonius, another illustrious historian, whose youth coincided with the reign of Domitian (A. D. 81–96), held the office of tribune under Trajan (98–117) and of *magister*

[27] *Ann.,* XV, 44. The following is the Latin text: *"Auctor nominis eius Chrestus, Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem huius mali, sed per Urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque."*

epistolarum, that is, private secretary of the emperor, under Hadrian (117–138). Between the years 110 and 120 he composed his work on the life of the first twelve Roman emperors, from Augustus to Domitian. Therein we find two passages referring to the Christians. In the first he says: "[Claudius] drove out of Rome the Jews, who, at the instigation of Chrestus, were stirring up perpetual disturbance." [28] This passage alludes to the imperial edict of the year 53, likewise mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (18:2), by virtue of which the Jews were expelled from the capital for having incited religious and political troubles. It is commonly admitted that the word "Chrestus," cited as a proper name, can mean only Jesus Christ. *Christos* (χριστός) was at that time a term incomprehensible to most Romans. It is thought that Suetonius erroneously substituted for it the word *Chrestos* (χρηστός), a much more familiar expression and one having the same pronunciation. Tertullian, who in his *Apologia* [29] cites Tacitus and Suetonius, draws attention to this inexactness. It is, moreover, undeniable that Suetonius had a rather vague idea of the incident which he relates and that in his eyes Chrestus had in person attempted to incite rebellious deeds among the Jews of Rome. Inasmuch as it concerned that execrated race, Suetonius did not observe it at very close range. But the information which he gives is none the less precious, since it shows that in the reign of Claudius (A. D. 41–54), only ten or twenty years after Our Lord's death, the name of Christ had reached Rome and was stirring up excitement among the Jews of the imperial metropolis, doubtless because such of them as rejected Christianity rose up against their converted co-religionists.

In a second passage relative to Christianity,[30] Suetonius ex-

[28] *Vita Claudii,* XXV: *"Iudaeos, impulsante Chresto assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit."*

[29] V, 21.

[30] *Vita Neronis,* XV.

presses himself in more general terms. After telling how Nero accused the Christians of setting fire to Rome, he adds that they were condemned to various punishments because they adhered to "a new and wicked superstition."[31] This text shows that in Nero's reign there were devoted followers of Christ at Rome; but it says nothing about the Savior Himself.

Several other pagan writers of the second century have expressed more or less vague opinions about Our Lord. Such are *Lucian,* who has been called the Voltaire of his time, the neo-Pythagorean *Numenius,*[32] *Phlegon,* a freedman of Hadrian,[33] the eclectic *Galenus,*[34] and *Celsus.* Lucian and Celsus are the only ones that we need consider.

Lucian, the famous Epicurean satirist, without directly naming Jesus, introduces Him in his *Death of Peregrinus.* He calls Him "the crucified sophist," "the man crucified in Palestine," and speaks of Him as a well-known personage, though long since dead. He is, says Lucian, the great lawgiver of the Christians, whom He ordered to repudiate the worship of Greek divinities, to adore Himself in their place, to regard themselves as brothers, and to practice the most perfect charity toward one another. With his descriptions Lucian mingles numberless sarcastic and satirical thrusts, preferably attacking Our Lord's miracles.[35]

Celsus, an eclectic Platonist,[36] is known particularly for his *True Word* (ἀληθὴς λόγος), that is, "agreeing with the truth." It is an extremely violent pamphlet against Christ and Christianity. This work has disappeared long since; but it can, in great part, be reconstructed, thanks to the very numer-

[31] *"Affecti suppliciis christiani, genus hominum superstitionis novae maleficae."*

[32] He lived in the first half of the second century.

[33] The same date.

[34] Second half of the same century.

[35] See T. Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien,* 1893, pp. 517–528; F. Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., I, 152–155.

[36] The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown. At any rate it is certain that he lived in the second century, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180).

ous passages which Origen quotes from it in order to refute it.[37] "I know it all," says Celsus, speaking of the Christian religion. In truth, he does show an astonishing knowledge of Christ, the Gospels, and Christianity. But it is confused knowledge. He has, indeed, read the Gospels, but he has also read the Jewish legends, even the most scurrilous, regarding the Savior, and in them particularly he puts his trust.[38] Although, up to a certain point, he is forced to admire the moral teaching of the Gospels, he asserts that it does not differ from that of the Greek philosophers. As for the miracles of Christ, he perverts them in order the more easily to ridicule them.[39]

We noted above that the Jewish documents have nothing to offer us on the Savior's life. It is quite evident that the pagan documents are even more destitute, when they are not more depraved, as in the case of Lucian and Celsus. Let us turn now to Christian sources.

II. Christian Documents

Here again, since we do not want our treatment to be incomplete, a distinction must be drawn: the Christian sources regarding Jesus Christ are of two very different kinds, according as they form or do not form part of canonical literature.

I. The writings in the latter class belong to three groups:

[37] See *Origen, Contra Celsum,* in eight books, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. XI, cols. 641–1632. Migne's *Demonstration Évangélique* reproduces Élie Bochereau's French translation (Amsterdam, 1700). See also Theo. Keim, *Des Celsus wahres Wort . . . wiederhergestellt, übersetzt und erläutert,* 1873; B. Aubé, *Le Discours Véritable de Celse; Essai de Restitution et de Traduction,* in the *Histoire des Persécutions de l'Église,* II, 277–589; O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur,* II, 127–132.

[38] This was noted by Origen, *Contra Celsum,* I, 35 and II, 10. Lactantius, *Divin. Institut.,* V, iii, 18, also found the rabbinical calumnies in pagan authors. On this question see W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen,* pp. 452–486.

[39] Cf. Vigouroux, *op. cit.,* I, 133–151; E. Pélagaud, *Celse et les Premières Luttes entre la Philosophie Grecque et le Christianisme Naissant,* 1879.

the *Agrapha,* the Apostolic Fathers, and the apocryphal Gospels.

1. The *Agrapha,* or *Dicta Christi Agrapha,*[40] consist of a certain number of sayings that were attributed to Our Lord by ancient tradition, but which are not to be found in any of the inspired Gospels. Some of these sayings have been handed down to us by the Fathers; others come from ancient manuscripts, more or less recently discovered. For some time past they have attracted the attention of critics and scholars, who have catalogued, studied, and commented on them with great care.[41] As lately as 1897 and 1904 their number was augmented by the discovery, on old Egyptian papyri, of new *Agrapha,* over which the learned world has disputed with considerable feeling.[42]

Everything considered, the *Agrapha* which can be reasonably regarded as genuine are very few in number. At most there are fourteen of them, according to the judgment of one who in our day has studied them with the greatest care;[43] and we may even have to reduce that figure if we are to stay

[40] *Agrapha* is a Greek word, (ἄγραφα) meaning "unwritten," in this case, "not recorded by the Evangelists."

[41] The most complete work that has appeared on the *Agrapha* is that of Dr. A. Resch, *Ausserkanonische Paralleltexte zu den Evangelien gesammelt und untersucht,* 3 vols., 1893–1896. But another scholar, Ropes, in *Die Sprüche Jesu die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht überliefert sind,* 1896, proves that Resch, carried away by excessive zeal, falls into great exaggerations. The reader will find the chief of these *Dicta* in Nestle, *Novi Testamenti Graeci Supplementum,* 1896, pp. 89–92, and in Preuschen, *Antilegomena, die Reste der ausserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Ueberlieferungen,* 1901, pp. 44–47 (2d ed., 1905).

[42] See especially Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur,* I, 389–391; Grenfell and Hunt, Λογία Ἰησοῦ, *Sayings of Our Lord from an Early Greek Papyrus,* 1897; Th. Zahn, *"Die jüngst gefundenen Aussprüche Jesu,"* in the *Theologisches Litteraturblatt,* 1897, pp. 417–420, 425, 431; A. Harnack, *Ueber die jüngst entdeckten Sprüche Jesu,* 1897; P. Batiffol, *"Les Logia du Papyrus de Behnesa,"* in the *Revue Biblique,* V (1897); pp. 501–515, and *"Nouveaux Fragments Évangéliques de Behnesa"* (*ibid.,* 1904, pp. 481–490); C. Taylor, *The Oxyrrhyncus Logia and the Apocryphal Gospels,* 1899; W. Bauer, *op. cit.,* pp. 377–415; Evelyn White, *The Sayings of Jesus from Oxyrrhyncus,* 1920.

[43] Ropes, *loc. cit.* Dr. Resch accepts as many as sixty-three.

within the truth. What new horizon are these documents able to open up for our view of Christ? A few examples will suffice to show that, while we do find the spirit of the Savior in several of the *Agrapha* that have come down to us, they nowise modify our impression of Him.[44] "Be good bankers; I will judge you according to the state in which I find you; Ask for great things and you will obtain little things, ask for heavenly goods and you will obtain earthly goods; What is weak will be saved by that which is strong." On seeing a Jew working on the Sabbath, Jesus is reported to have said: "O man, if thou knowest what thou dost, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and thou dost transgress the Law."[45]

2. We shall be more fortunate in consulting the earliest Fathers, though the new details which they furnish us on the life of Christ amount to but little. The learned apologists *St. Justin*[46] and *St. Irenaeus*[47] explicitly affirm that the Blessed Virgin belonged to the race of David. *Julius Africanus*[48] describes the genealogical tree of the Holy Family and mentions its various places of abode. *St. Hegesippus*[49] enumerates our Lord's nearest relations. *St. Justin* gives us a portrait of John the Baptist, as also of Jesus. *Clement of Alexandria*[50] supplies the names of several of the seventy-two disciples, while the *Clementine Homilies*[51] mention those of the Syrophenician woman and her daughter (Justa and Bernice). According to *Eusebius,*[52] the woman with the flow

[44] Of course, we must expect that beautiful saying of Our Lord, unquestionably genuine, which St. Paul records (Acts 20:35): "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

[45] Cf. E. Hennecke, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen,* pp. 9–11.

[46] *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 43, 45, 101, etc.

[47] *Adv. Haer.,* III, xxi, 3, etc.

[48] In Eusebius, *H. E.,* I, 7.

[49] *Ibid.,* II, xxiii, 14; III, xx, 1–2.

[50] *Stromata,* II, xx, 116; cfr. Eusebius, *H. E.,* II, i, 4.

[51] II, 19; III, 73.

[52] *H. E.,* VII, 18.

of blood, out of gratitude for her cure, built a monument to Our Lord in the city of Banias (Caesarea Philippi). *Clement of Alexandria*[53] informs us of the last counsels which Christ addressed to His disciples and His instruction to them not to leave Jerusalem for the evangelization of the pagans until twelve years after His Ascension. *Papias*[54] adds some details to what St. Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles tell us about the horrible death of Judas. In their proper chronological place we shall cite still other items of the same sort. These bits of information ought to be gratefully received, although at times with circumspection. But we can readily see that even the most interesting of them but slightly enrich our documentation.

3. When we pass to the *apocryphal gospels,*[55] a whole new world opens before us. But what a world! And how, from the very first, it arouses our just suspicions! These writings are about forty in number, many of them, at least in their primitive form, dating back to the second century of our era and owing their birth to two causes, both most unhappy if considered from the viewpoint of historic truth. Some were composed simply to gratify the curiosity—legitimate up to a certain point, but readily becoming indiscreet—of the early Christians, who desired as complete information as possible on the life of the Divine Master; more especially—and therein was the danger—on those periods which the canonical Gospels had left in obscurity: the periods of His infancy and youth, certain circumstances of His Passion, His descent into Limbo, His Resurrection.[56] Was it not to be feared that there would

[53] *Stromata,* VI, 5.

[54] Cf. Cramer, *Catena ad Acta S. Apost.,* p. 12.

[55] This designation is used here as opposed to "canonical" and means that the gospels in question do not form part of the Canon, *i.e.,* the official list of Sacred Books.

[56] It is worthy of note that none of the extant apocryphal gospels takes up the public life of Christ. That was considered sufficiently covered by the true Gospels.

be a temptation to gratify this curiosity with details more or less imaginary? This is just what happened. The writings of this first class, while in a general way taking the inspired Gospels as a basis, launched forth into all sorts of developments devoid of reality, which we will criticize later on. Such are, for the hidden life of the Savior, the *Protevangelium of James* (the Less),[57] with the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Gospel of the Nativity of Mary,* which are nothing more than simple recensions;[58] the *Gospel according to Thomas,*[59] the *Arabic Gospel of the Childhood,*[60] the *History of Joseph the Carpenter,*[61] the *Death of Mary;*[62] for Christ's Passion and Resurrection, the *Gospel of Nicodemus,* made up of two parts: the *Acts of Pilate*[63] and the *Descent of Christ into Hell,*[64] lastly, the *Letter of Abgar* to our Lord.[65]

All these writings, despite their considerable imperfections, were composed with upright and honest intentions. We cannot say as much for the apocryphal gospels of another category, which owe their origin to an unhealthy tendency, that of propagating the most pernicious doctrines under a form the more perfidious as it bore an innocent appearance. Among others the first Gnostics and the Docetae strove to open a quicker and easier path for their errors by inserting them in compositions of this kind, on which they sought to bestow the greater authority by placing them under the false patronage of Apostles or other holy persons. The Fathers frequently

[57] Latter part of the second century, in its present form. This date and the following ones are approximate, since the best critics are unable to agree in fixing the dates with certainty.

[58] Both were written probably in the fourth or fifth century.

[59] Written perhaps in the middle of the second century.

[60] Perhaps in the fourth century.

[61] Fourth century.

[62] End of the fourth century.

[63] They date perhaps from the second century.

[64] It is believed to belong to the fourth century.

[65] Perhaps about the end of the third century.

insist on this fact, against which they warn the faithful.[66] The *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*[67] and the *Gospel according to Thomas*[68] are openly heretical. The *Gospel according to the Hebrews,*[69] the *Gospel according to the Egyptians,*[70] and the *Gospel according to Peter*[71] contain several errors; but, on the whole, seem to have been in conformity with Christian tradition. Of these various writings there remain only fragments.[72]

From the details which we have just set forth it is evident that the historian who proposes to write the Life of Christ can hardly count on the apocryphal gospels to increase his information. Except for a few items of quite secondary im-

[66] Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* I, 20; St. Epiphanius, *Haer.,* XLIII, 8; LXI, 1; LXIII, 2; St. Philastrius, *Haer.,* 88; Eusebius, *H. E.,* III, 25; St. Augustine, *De Actis cum Pel. Man.,* XI, 6, and *Contr. Advers. Legis,* II, 20, 39 etc.

[67] End of the second century.

[68] Same date. It should not be confused with *The Gospel of the Infancy according to Thomas,* mentioned above.

[69] Second century. The Judeo-Christian churches of Palestine and Syria valued it highly.

[70] Composed about 140.

[71] End of the second century.

[72] Our readers will understand that we can but skim over these matters, which are connected with our subject only in an indirect way. The following are some of the principal works that have been published on the subject of the apocryphal gospels. First of all there are the collections of Fabricius (1703; new editions in 1719 and 1743), of Thilo (1832), of Tischendorf (1853; 2d ed., 1876), of G. Brunet (*Les Évangiles Apocryphes Traduits et Annotés d'après l'Édition de J. C. Thilo,* 1843, 2d ed., 1863), of Edgar Hennecke (*Neutestamentliche Apokryphen, in deutscher Übersetzung mit Einleitungen,* 1904, pp. 1–79), of Bousquet and Amann (*Les Apocryphes du Nouveau Testament,* in course of publication), Hemmer and Lejay (*Textes et Documents,* in course of publication). There are also special works, including the following: C. Tischendorf, *De Evangeliorum Apocryphorum Origine et Usu,* 1851; J. Variot, *Les Évangiles Apocryphes: Valeur Littéraire, Forme Primitive, Transformations,* etc., 1878. See also Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons,* Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 642 ff.; Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur,* I, 379–411. Attempts have been made to recount the life of Christ according to these Gospels: Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* 1854; Tappehorn, *Ausserbiblische Nachrichten oder die Apokryphen über die Geburt, Kindheit und das Lebensende Jesu und Mariä,* 1883; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen,* 1903.

portance, what they add to the canonical Gospels is made up either of crude amplifications or of legends that pile wonder on wonder and presuppose an astounding amount of credulity in those for whom they were intended. In a word, their content makes a sorry figure when compared with that of the true Gospels, of which they are, after all, merely the counterfeit. In particular, the Savior's image, as they seek to portray it, when placed beside that picture of exquisite beauty which we so much admire in the pages of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, is no better than a rather cheap caricature.

In those writings the character of the Divine Infant has none of the grace and simplicity that wins all hearts to Mary's Son. Everything in Him is artificial, theatrical, at times singularly unfamiliar. He shows Himself haughty, capricious, vindictive. He disobeys His parents and gives insolent answers to His teachers. The people were afraid of Him and had good reason to be.

What is told of His miracles is still more surprising. The Evangelist St. John expressly asserts that the first of Christ's miracles was performed at Cana of Galilee, at the beginning of His public life.[73] The apocryphal gospels, on the contrary, have Him performing numerous wonders in early childhood. And what wonders! Not only do they constitute an accumulation of useless marvels, but often they are done without any moral purpose or, what is worse, for some purely selfish reason. One reading them soon becomes weary. It is a senseless and shocking exhibition of a superhuman power seeking merely to arouse astonishment.[74] Thus, for instance, when the aged Simeon takes the Child Jesus in his arms, the latter becomes resplendent with light, like a column of fire. During the flight into Egypt, the trees bend at His passing and the idols

[73] John 2: 11.

[74] See L. C. Fillion, *Les Miracles de N.-S. Jésus-Christ,* I, 158–163.

tumble down of their own accord. At Nazareth, after breaking His pitcher on the way to the well, He brings back the water in His cloak. He makes birds out of potter's clay and then gives them life. There is a dogmatic preoccupation visibly running through it all: the writers desired to show that, even as a little Child, the Savior was truly the Son of God. With a like intention other wonders take place to manifest Mary's virginity and that of Joseph. The words of the Child Jesus, though few in number in these queer writings—for the dearth of doctrine is no less marked than the abundance of marvels—are, for the most part, as devoid of interest as are His prodigies. More than once they are inspired by vanity or unkindness.

It follows that not without good reason are the apocryphal gospels judged severely. However, as St. Jerome remarks,[75] we find in them here and there a few grains of gold in the mass of dirt (*aurum in luto*). And these Gospels contain certain details to which we can attach historical value: among others, some things about the Blessed Virgin (her Presentation in the Temple, her glorious Assumption, etc.), the presence of the ox and the ass in the stable of Bethlehem, Jesus meeting His mother on the road to Golgotha, etc. But these details are far from numerous, and it is evident that we should pass information of this sort through the sieve of critical inspection before accepting it as true.

II. Let us recognize, then, that the non-canonical sources for the Life of our Savior are of but mediocre usefulness. Our real aids, the documents from which we can draw safely and plentifully, are those *New Testament writings* which reproduce Christ's image in the liveliest colors, most in harmony with historic reality. It takes all the hardihood of contemporary Rationalism to assert that, within this field, the "state of the documents is discouraging," whereas, on the contrary,

[75] *Epist.*, CVII, *ad Laetam*, 12.

they are so abundant, clear, and exact for all eyes not blinded by dogmatic prejudices.

1. The testimony of St. Paul has a special value for us. Paul was a contemporary of Jesus in the strict sense of the word. We find him in Jerusalem at the very time when there broke forth against the nascent Church a persecution of which he was, as he himself avows, one of the most violent instigators.[76] Perchance he already lived there for the pursuit of his studies "at the feet of Gamaliel" [77] during Our Lord's public life, and it is quite possible, as has often been supposed, that he knew the Divine Master at least by sight. However that may be, this austere Pharisee,[78] filled with tireless zeal for Judaism, a sworn enemy of the Christian religion, endowed also with a very positive spirit, must surely have devoted himself, either before or after his conversion, to a deep study of Jesus and His work. Eye-witnesses were not wanting to supply him with all desirable information.[79] His very conversion, which changed a blasphemer and persecutor into a whole-hearted Apostle of Christ, that sudden and marvelous break with his whole past, could not have come about—leaving out of account the power of divine grace—without a profound knowledge of the life of Christ. As a matter of fact, in what concerns the Savior's human history, Paul knew all, as he shows by the numerous allusions to it found at every turn in his discourses and Epistles. Let us endeavor to make a rapid sketch of our Lord's life according to the facts which Paul mentions at different times.[80]

[76] Acts 7:57; 8:3; 22:4 f.; 26:9–11; Tim. 1:13.

[77] Acts 22:3. Those studies must have lasted several years.

[78] Phil. 3:5 f.

[79] St. Paul had close relations with several Apostles and with the first Christians. Cf. Acts 9:17–19, 26–28; 11:25–30; 15:1–29; 21:17–21; Gal. 1:18 f.; 2:1–38, etc.

[80] See Drechsler, *Das Leben Jesu in Paulus,* 1900; Paul Feine, *Jesus Christus und Paulus,* 1902, pp. 295–297; Goguel, *L'Apôtre Paul et Jésus-Christ,* 1904, pp. 71–95; A. Ruegg, *Der Apostel Paulus und sein Zeugnis von Jesus Christus,* 1906,

Jesus was truly clothed with human nature; He was born of woman (*Rom.* 5:15; 8:4; *1 Cor.* 15:21; *Gal.* 4:4; *Phil.* 2:7). He belonged to the Jewish race (*Rom.* 4:1; *Gal.* 3:16), to the tribe of Juda (*Heb.* 7:14), to the family of David (*Rom.* 1:3; *2 Tim.* 2:8). He had "brothers," that is, cousins (*1 Cor.* 9:5), one of whom, the Apostle St. James the Less, is mentioned by name (*Gal.* 1:19). He became poor for our sake, to enrich us by His poverty (*2 Cor.* 8:9). He freely submitted to the Mosaic Law (*Gal.* 4:4). He never committed the slightest sin (*2 Cor.* 5:12); the Spirit of holiness filled Him (*Rom.* 1:4). In His outward ministry, He confined Himself to Israel (*Rom.* 15:8). He gathered around Him a group of intimate disciples, the Apostles, whom He destined to be bearers of the glad tidings (*1 Cor.* 9:5; 15:7, 9; *Gal.* 1:17, 19). Paul knows that the chief of them were Peter, "Cephas" (*1 Cor.* 9:5; 15:5; *Gal.* 1:16; 2:7) and John (*Gal.* 2:9); that one of them shamefully betrayed his Master (*1 Cor.* 1:23). He knows and quotes in his Epistles several of Jesus' sayings: notably the one about marriage (*1 Cor.* 6:10, 25), another about the right of those who preach the Gospel to live by the Gospel (*1 Cor.* 8:14). Though he does not expressly speak of any of the Savior's miracles, he is not unaware that an Apostle can perform miracles in His name (*2 Cor.* 12:12).

Christ's Passion furnishes St. Paul with especially abundant matter. So familiar is he with the painful and humiliating scenes of the Passion that when he relates them to the faithful, his hearers are present, as it were, at the Savior's Crucifixion (*Gal.* 3:1). Before dying, the Divine Master instituted the Holy Eucharist, and Paul sets forth the principal details of the institution in the same way as do the Synoptic Evangelists (*1 Cor.* 11:23–25). The Apostle of the Gentiles

pp. 58–82; O. Moe, *Paulus und die evangelische Geschichte*, 1912; L. C. Fillion, *"Jésus ou Paul?"* in the *Revue du Clergé Français*, Vol. LXX (1912), pp. 392–401; R. J. Knowling, *The Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, 2d ed., 1902, pp. 200–228.

alludes to the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (*Heb.* 5:7), the shameful outrages inflicted on Jesus by His cruel enemies (*Rom.* 15:3), His wonderful obedience to the will of His heavenly Father (*Phil.* 2:8; *Heb.* 12:2), as also His state of profound powerlessness at the hour of His Passion (*2 Cor.* 13:4). Jesus died on the cross (*Gal.* 3:1, 13), and two notorious criminals were put to death with Him (*Col.* 13:14). His execution took place outside of Jerusalem (*Heb.* 13:12). He was buried (*1 Cor.* 15:4). The third day He rose from the dead, as the Prophets had foretold (*Rom.* 8:11; *1 Cor.* 15:4, etc.). Then He appeared several times to His Apostles and disciples (*1 Cor.* 15:5–8). Finally, He ascended into Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father (*Rom.* 8:34; *Eph.* 1:20, etc.). On the last day He will come to judge the living and the dead (*1 Thess.* 1:10; 4:13–16; *2 Thess.* 1:6–10, etc.).

We scarcely need to add that, for St. Paul, Jesus is not only the Messias,[81] the new Adam, the head of regenerated humanity (*Rom.* 5:12 ff.; *1 Cor.* 5:32, 45 f., etc.), but the Son of God (*Rom.* 1:3–4; *1 Cor.* 8:6; *2 Cor.* 4:4; *Col.* 1:15 f.; *Phil.* 2:5; *Heb.* 1:4–14, and very frequently in other places), possessing and manifesting all the attributes of divinity.

"It is truly an abundant Life of Jesus that is offered us" in St. Paul's writings,[82] and the Apostle of the Gentiles is for us of undoubted value as a witness to the Gospel facts. It has recently been said [83] that he would have been quite as well equipped to compose a Gospel himself, as his disciple Luke did later on. The moral portrait of the Savior, as St. Paul draws it in his Epistles, is of remarkable exactness and presupposes a more than ordinary acquaintance with the Life of

[81] The Apostle uses the title "Christ" almost four hundred times and often treats it as a proper name.

[82] Th. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, I, 42.

[83] Ruegg, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

the Divine Model. Paul does not, in any one place or with one stroke, set forth the Savior's portrait in its entirety; but, by grouping together the various traits described here and there, we obtain a striking likeness. More than one recent critic has remarked, in concert with believing exegetes: "The general impression that Paul had of Jesus' earthly life, which was, he said, one of abasement, poverty, and servitude, is quite in accord with the Gospel tradition." [84]

2. The numerous data which St. Paul furnishes on the history of Jesus are supplemented by those of the Acts of the Apostles, the seven so-called Catholic Epistles,[85] and the Apocalypse. Scattered through these nine writings we also meet quite a few details of our Lord's life. There is mention of His Baptism by the precursor (*Acts* 1:22), His many miracles (*Acts* 2:22, etc.), His Transfiguration (*2 Peter* 1:16–18), His titles of Son of David (*Acts* 2:30), Son of God (*Acts* 9:20, etc.), Good Shepherd (*1 Peter* 2:25), and Savior of the world (*Acts* 9:12), the revelations which the ancient Prophets of Israel made regarding Him (*Acts* 10:43, etc.), His betrayal by Judas (*Acts* 1:16–19), the outrages inflicted on Him during His Passion by Herod, Pilate, and the Jews (*Acts* 3:13 f., 4:27, etc.), His Crucifixion (*Acts* 2:23, 36, etc.), His burial (*Acts* 2:19, etc.), His Resurrection (*Acts* 2:24, etc.), His Ascension (*Acts* 2:34), and His second coming (*James* 5:7 f., etc.).

We have abridged to avoid repetition. But is it not true that these books, like St. Paul's Epistles, contain a complete sketch of the life of Christ? The Apocalypse honors Him especially as the Lamb freely immolated for our salvation, as the Divine Logos, as the eternal Wisdom by which God created the world. What wealth these treasures contain, merely from the bio-

[84] A. Deissmann, *Paulus, eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Skizze*, 1911, p. 115.

[85] Those of St. James, St. Peter (two), St. John (three), and St. Jude.

graphical point of view! And yet we recognize that this wealth of material is but little, compared with what the canonical Gospels place at our disposal.

3. *The Gospels.* We have been longing to reach them, for they are, in the final analysis, our real sources, our essential documents for the Life of Christ. Thanks to the other New Testament books, a solid nucleus of the Life, at the same time human and divine, has been preserved. Nevertheless, only the Gospels are able to give us complete information on the earthly existence of God made man, to place before our eyes His august features, still so much alive after the passing of nineteen centuries.

But a preliminary question presents itself in the matter of the Gospels: What is their historical value? Does what they relate about the Savior's Person and Life correspond to the strict truth? This question, in turn, divides itself into several others: From what authors do our four Gospels come and at what date were they composed? Have they come down to us without the loss of any of their original purity? Do the accounts contained in them, so impregnated with the supernatural, deserve our full confidence? In short, what opinion should we hold of the Gospels as regards their authenticity, integrity, and credibility?

A large volume would scarcely suffice for a complete reply to these questions, simple in themselves, but which Rationalist criticism has complicated for a century past. We will, at least, endeavor to say what is essential, to point out the chief arguments by which to establish the historical value of our Gospels, regarded as the basis of the Life of Christ.[86]

[86] Our readers will understand that it is impossible for us to give these proofs the development they deserve. But there are excellent works in which the authenticity, integrity, and credibility of the Gospels are demonstrated with all desirable fullness. See especially P. Batiffol, *Six Leçons sur les Evangiles,* 9th ed., 1911; J. Belser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 2d ed., 1905; A. Brassac, *Manuel Biblique,* Vol. III, *Les Saints Évangiles,* 15th ed., 1920; H. Boese, S. J., *Die Glaubwürdigkeit unserer Evangelien,* 1895; R. Cornely, S. J., *Introductio Speci-*

III. The Authenticity of the Canonical Gospels

I. Let us first call to mind certain *preliminary facts*. The word "gospel" (from the Anglo-Saxon *god*, good, and *spel*, story) is our translation of the Latin *evangelium*, from the Greek εὐαγγέλιον (εὖ, well; ἀγγέλω, I announce). It means, therefore, "good news." In the New Testament writings, Christ Himself [87] and the Apostles [88] use this word to designate the truly good news, that of salvation brought to the entire world by the Divine Redeemer. At first the Gospel was preached with unwearying zeal by the earliest Christian missionaries. But, as St. Luke expressly affirms in his prologue,[89] it was not long before it was set forth in writing in special books, to which in the first half of the second century, if not still earlier, by a happy metaphor, was given the name of Gospels, the Gospel of Jesus, written in fourfold form by four different authors.

There never have been more than four canonical Gospels, that is, officially received by the Church—"neither more nor less" (*nec plura nec pauciora*), as the councils express it,[90]

alis in Singulos Libros Novi Testamenti, 2d ed., Vol. I; E. Jacquier, *Histoire des Livres du Nouveau Testament*, Vol. II, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, 7th ed.; Vol. IV, *Les Écrites Johanniques*, 4th ed.; I. L. Gondal, *La Provenance des Évangiles*, 1908; E. Mangenot, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, 1911; J. Schäfer, *Die Evangelien und die Evangelienkritik*, 2d ed., 1911; H. Wallon, *De la Croyance due à l'Évangile*, 3d ed., 1887. All these works are by Catholics. The following are by conservative Protestant authors: F. Godet, *Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, Vol. II, 1904; G. Salmon, *An Historical Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, 9th ed., 1904; V. H. Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, 2 vols., 1903 and 1909; C. Tischendorf, *Wann wurden unsere Evangelien verfasst?* 4th ed., 1866; B. F. Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, 5th ed., 1875; Th. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 3d ed., 1907, Vol. II. We will later cite some special works on the Fourth Gospel.

[87] Matt. 24:14; 26:13; Mark 1:15; 16:15, etc.

[88] Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:1; 1 Pet. 4:17; Apoc. 14:6, etc. St. Paul uses it more than sixty times.

[89] Luke 1:1–4.

[90] The latest being those of Trent (Sess. IV) and of the Vatican (*Constit. Dogm.*, II, can. 4).

following St. Irenaeus;[91] four Gospels, written successively by St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. However far back we go in the history of Christian origins, we find that such is the firm belief of the entire Church, often explicitly affirmed. This faith has stood unmoved in the face of every attack, whether coming from heretics with an impious end in view, or from misinformed Christians, seeking surreptitiously to introduce something new.

It will be useful at this point to recall another fact. Even a rapid perusal of the Gospels leads one to observe two striking phenomena. It is certain that the Gospels according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, compared with St. John's, form a group or family apart. Notwithstanding undeniable resemblances, when we pass from this group to the Fourth Gospel, we seem almost to enter a new world, so notable do the divergences appear to be. It has been calculated that the points common to the four narratives do not amount to one-twelfth of the account given by the beloved Apostle. Let us say at once that there is nothing surprising in this, since St. John expressly intended to complement the work of the three previous Evangelists by publishing new details of the Savior's life and portraying Him in a special aspect. Furthermore, the agreements and resemblances between his narrative and theirs are many, as has often been proved.[92] The four Gospels, in spite of their variations and their distinct shadings, are closely connected to one another by unity of facts, unity of doctrine, and unity of spirit.

A second and no less remarkable phenomenon consists in the family likenesses, impressing one at the first glance, between the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is for this reason that they are called the "Synoptic" Gospels.[93]

[91] He seems to have been the first (*Adv. Haer.*, III, xi, 8) to use the classical expression, "the tetramorphous Gospel," *i. e.*, having four forms.

[92] See L. Cf. Fillion, *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles*, pp. 53–62.

[93] This term comes from the Greek word σύνοψις, whence the English "synopsis"

"If," says Dr. Zahn, "anyone were to read these Gospels one after the other for the first time, while reading the second or third he would certainly recall that, at bottom, he had previously read once or twice the same accounts and the same discourses, frequently in the identical order and always in words very similar, sometimes literally identical." [94]

But that is not all. This resemblance constitutes only one phase of what has been called the "Synoptic problem." It is also easy to note a multitude of divergences which create an interesting complication, though difficult of explanation. Like the differences, so, too, the agreements concern both the substance and the form of the narratives. We will point out merely the chief ones.[95]

First, as to the *resemblances*. In subject-matter, the three Synoptic Gospels have the same historical, doctrinal, and moral basis, the same series of events and discourses, numerous episodes in common. The preaching of the Precursor, the Baptism and temptation of Christ, His ministry in Galilee, His journey to Jerusalem for the last Passover of His earthly life, His Passion, death, and Resurrection, these items constitute the theme treated by all the Synoptics. When we think of the enormous abundance of material to which the Apostle St. John alludes,[96] this resemblance in subject-matter is doubly

(a simultaneous view, what is embraced in one and the same glance), used to designate books in which our Gospels are printed in parallel columns to facilitate the study of their relations to one another. Hence the name "Synoptics," applied to the first three Gospels, which particularly lend themselves to this treatment.

[94] *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* II, 182.

[95] A Gospel synopsis (L. C. Fillion, *Synopsis Evangelica,* 1882; Camerlynck and Coppieters, *Evangeliorum secundum Matthaeum, Marcum et Lucam Synopsis,* 1908; A. Brassac, *Nova Evangeliorum Synopsis,* 1913, etc.), especially a synopsis composed according to the Greek text (Friedlieb, *Quatuor Evangelia Sacra . . . in Harmoniam Redacta,* 2d ed., 1903; A. Huck, *Synopse der drei ersten Evangelien,* 4th ed., 1911, etc.) is necessary if one wishes to study the details of the problem. See also Fillion, *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles,* 1889, and J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae, Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem,* 2d ed., 1900.

[96] John 21 : 25.

remarkable, since the authors had an embarrassing wealth of matter from which to choose in order to vary their accounts. Moreover, with the three Synoptics, these various elements are nearly always coördinated in the same way. Our surprise increases when we examine a particular incident related by all of them.[97]

In the matter of form or style, our observations are still more astonishing. Not only do the three Evangelists use the same Greek dialect, called Hellenistic,[98] quite distinct from classical Greek, introducing a certain number of expressions borrowed from the Aramaic language then spoken in Palestine; not only is the tone of the narrative identical in all three—simple, popular, and dramatic—but the similarity in diction extends even to sentence structure and word arrangement, to peculiarities of spelling and grammar. Rather often it even goes to literal identity, especially, as we might expect, when reporting Our Lord's sayings and discourses. "At the side of these resemblances, these same books present characteristics quite opposite. The diversity is sometimes even more remarkable: the order of events may be found inverted, the elements are displaced and arranged in a different way, the expression changes, the color alters, numerous omissions and additions render now one, now another of these collections more complete in its material, more precise in details."[99] These differences are manifested in every direction. Thus St. Mark entirely omits the accounts of the Savior's infancy; St. Matthew here and there groups the miracles and discourses of Christ according to a logical order, while St. Luke

[97] *E. g.*, the extraordinary curing of a paralytic in a house where our Lord was addressing a large gathering (Matt. 9: 1–8; Mark 2: 1–12; Luke 5: 17–26). The parenthetical remark, "He saith to the sick of the palsy," inserted identically in all three narratives, deserves special attention from the viewpoint we are now considering.

[98] Later on we shall note that we no longer possess the Gospel according to St. Matthew in its primitive form, but in a faithful translation.

[99] E. Reuss, *Histoire Evangélique, Synopse des trois Premiers Evangiles*, p. 15.

follows rather a chronological sequence of events. Each of the Synoptists introduces into his narrative some episodes or details which are not recorded by the other two. Each of them has his own style or manner, his favorite expressions, his characteristic turn of mind. It happens that, after a passage where their resemblance goes to the point of verbal identity, they suddenly part company, though it be only by the use of a synonymous word. Most of the time these differences are of small account and concern matters of quite secondary importance in the narrative; but they also occur in graver matters, sometimes even constituting apparent contradictions.[100]

We should not fail to note that in itself there is nothing surprising in the existence of resemblances and differences between three historians writing on the same subject. What constitutes the "Synoptic problem" is the complexity of the phenomena that we have just indicated, the strange mixture of similarity and dissimilarity, carried to an extraordinary degree, in the matter of contents, arrangement, and language. There is nothing analogous in sacred or profane literature. In fact, if there were only resemblances between the three sacred writers, such similarity would be explained by saying that they had made use of the same sources; if there were merely differences, we would say that they had had recourse to distinct documents. How, then, does it happen that we find such a similarity of material and form along with such a multitude of differences?

The Fathers and early Doctors of the Church were, in general, but little concerned with this problem. They were satisfied with explaining the apparent contradictions to which we have just alluded.[101] The same line of action was followed in

[100] We shall point them out and offer solutions of them, when we come to the detailed account of our Lord's life.

[101] St. Augustine in particular did so in his famous treatise *De Consensu Evangelistarum Libri Quatuor*. See Vogels, *St. Augustin's Schrift De Consensu Evangelistarum*, 1908.

the Middle Ages and up to recent times. But for the last one hundred and fifty years or so, the Synoptic problem has become a subject of endless discussions, big and little dissertations almost innumerable. The problem is closely connected with the questions regarding the origin of the Gospels, questions which during this same period have been a matter of violent dispute.

At first the Protestants, and especially the Rationalists, were almost the only ones who raised the question and sought to solve it after their own fashion. This circumstance helped to imprint upon it at first an unfortunate direction.[102] Catholic exegetes entered the lists only somewhat later. Even then it was with moderate zeal, for they at once understood, in the first place, that the Synoptic problem is morally insoluble and, in the second place, that, even though its study might render a genuine service by throwing into relief the mutual relations of the first three Gospels, it is not of any appreciable usefulness for interpretation. Moreover, the schemes invented to account for the problem are so numerous and complicated that they produce darkness more often than light. Not infrequently they are plainly arbitrary and extravagant; thus Theo. Keim, an avowed Rationalist, regards them as "barren hypotheses, without a solid foundation." [103] Too often has it been forgotten that we have no right to neglect tradition when studying the Synoptic problem, nor to revel in conjectures devoid of any basis and in contradiction with the facts.

The many systems to which we have just referred all branch off from three principal ones. There is the hypothesis of a written tradition, that of an oral tradition, and that of

[102] The learned and judicious Dr. F. Kaulen says on this subject (*Einleitung in die heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments,* 1876, p. 380): "This question is especially treated by Protestant critics. To the great detriment of both science and faith, it has formed among Protestants, ever since Lessing, the chief point of studies relating to the New Testament."

[103] *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* II, 44.

the dependence of one Evangelist upon the one or two who preceded him.

The hypothesis of a written tradition assumes that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, each in turn according to his own purpose and particular needs, made use of a primitive Gospel, which had been published before the Aramaic text of St. Matthew and which served all of them as their principal documentary source. In this way their numerous resemblances would explain themselves. As for the differences, they are explained by supposing that this primitive Gospel had undergone successive revisions and that each of the Synoptists had before him a different revision.

If for the words "written tradition" we substitute "oral tradition," and if we suppose that tradition to have undergone gradual modifications, we shall have the general elements of the second theory, which starts from the undeniable fact that the Gospel was preached orally long before being consigned to writing. From numerous passages in the New Testament [104] and from information handed down by the earliest ecclesiastical writers, we can readily understand that the Savior's life, especially His public life, His Passion and Resurrection, formed the habitual subject of Apostolic preaching, as also in general of the preaching of the first Christian missionaries. By virtue of being often repeated, and probably also as the result of a previous understanding between the Apostles and their helpers, this subject before long acquired a well nigh fixed form. Yet it was not absolutely rigid, nor was there any hesitation in subjecting it to some modification according as the hearers were Jewish or pagan, Greek or Roman, barbarian or civilized. Thus, quite naturally, a traditional groundwork of the Life of Christ was formed, which, while remaining substantially the same, offered rather considerable variations, according to difference of country, preacher, and other secon-

[104] See particularly Luke 1:2 and Gal. 3:1.

dary circumstances. In this oral tradition, identical and yet varied, we would have the key both to the resemblances and to the characteristic differences that exist among the first three Gospels.

The hypothesis of mutual dependence, or of reciprocal utilization by the Synoptic Evangelists, has also found many partisans. It can be summed up in a few words. The second Evangelist in the order of time made use of the work of the first; the third composed his work by using the Gospels written by the two earlier authors. Thus the resemblances explain themselves. The digressions or differences occur whenever the sacred writer exercised his freedom by following other sources.

If we were here to take up the Synoptic question *ex professo,* we should have to express a conclusion, with its supporting reasons, in the matter of all these theories and the multitude of variations that have been grafted on each of them.[105] For our present purpose it will suffice to say that they all offer advantages and difficulties. But none of them is able by itself to furnish an adequate explanation of the problem. It is by combining them in various degrees that we obtain the most satisfactory solution, bearing in mind the data of tradition relative to the composition and chronological order of the first three Gospels.[106]

II. We had to touch upon these preliminary questions in order to acquaint our readers with the nature of the Gospel documents. Let us now pass to more important considerations, first of all to the proofs of the authenticity of our four canonical Gospels.

The composition of a book by such or such an author, at such or such a date, is a fact of history. When the date goes back to ancient times, it is chiefly by the aid of historical evi-

[105] We have done this in our *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles,* pp. 25–53.

[106] On the decision of the Biblical Commission, see an article published by us in the *Revue du Clergé Français,* February, 1916, pp. 230–246.

dence that we must study it. Such evidence constitutes what is called the extrinsic or external argument, that is, from considerations and evidence outside of the book itself. The intrinsic or internal argument, furnished by the contents of the book, the style, etc., has also its own value, and we shall not fail to have recourse to it; but it is far from possessing the same demonstrative force, the more so as it runs the risk of becoming at once subjective and arbitrary. It is of use especially to confirm and corroborate the extrinsic proof.

1. **The extrinsic argument,** or outside witnesses. In favor of the authenticity of our Gospels we can advance a long chain of evidence, leading us back to the beginning of the second, perhaps even to the close of the first century. It would fill many pages to cite them all. That, however, would be a useless procedure, for everyone, no matter to what school he belongs, agrees that from the last years of the second century the authenticity of the canonical Gospels was universally accepted as an indisputable fact in the already wide-spread Church.[107] Putting aside, therefore, the testimony of these eminent doctors—Epiphanius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine—although it is far from being negligible, let us take our stand at the meeting of the second and third centuries of our era and then, approaching nearer and nearer the period to which the composition of our four Gospels is attributed, let us question one by one those early Christian writers whose works we possess. For the sake of precision, we will divide them into three groups.

a) Between the years 170 and 220. To this period belong five remarkable testimonies: those of St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and the document known as the Canon of Muratori.

St. Irenaeus [108] enjoys a special authority because, as he in-

[107] Strauss himself frankly admits this in his *Vie de Jésus* (Littré's trans.), I, 76.

[108] He was born about 140 and died in 202.

forms us,[109] he had as a teacher the venerable St. Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the Apostle St. John. He is thus connected almost directly with the Apostolic age. After a youth spent in Asia Minor, he exercised his priestly zeal in the church of Lyons, where he subsequently became bishop. About the year 177 his predecessor, St. Pothinus, sent him to Rome to have several important questions decided by Pope Victor. From these details we see what facilities this great Doctor had for informing himself about the ancient traditions. In two of his writings, which have come down to us, he shows himself to be an ardent foe of all innovations, not only as a man of tradition, but as being in his own person a living witness. He constantly appeals to the "ancients" and to their "recollections," which he knew thoroughly.

Clement of Alexandria[110] is likewise a reliable witness to the most remote Christian traditions. After prolonged journeys in southern Italy, Greece, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, this converted pagan settled for some years at Alexandria and became the head of the famous theological school founded by St. Pantaenus (d. 200). Wherever he passed in his travels, he took pains, as he expressly says, to question the most learned and distinguished Christians on the subject of the traditions of their churches. Thus he is conscious of pointing out "the holy tradition relative to the blessed teaching which had been handed down directly, from father to son, since the Apostles Peter, James, John, and Paul."[111] He deserves, therefore, our entire confidence when he speaks of the Gospels and their origin.

Tertullian[112] at first vigorously defended the Christian faith in his "Apology" and in several other works. Before

[109] In his work *Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, and especially in his "Letter to Florinus," preserved by Eusebius, *H. E.*, V, xx, 4–6.

[110] Born about 150, died about 240.

[111] *Stromata*, I, i, 11.

[112] Born at Carthage about 160, converted to Christianity about 195.

letting himself be seduced by the Montanist errors, this energetic, earnest thinker could not tolerate that anyone should stray from the ancient traditions, which he had studied with great pains.

Origen,[113] who directed the School of Alexandria with high distinction, was also wonderfully well acquainted, through his studies, travels, and personal relations, with the traditions of all the churches, particularly in the matter of the Holy Scriptures, which were always the heart of his labors.

Here we have four eminent men, very well informed, belonging to different churches, representing Asia Minor, Gaul, Egypt, and Carthage. Their competency is beyond question. What have they to tell us regarding the number and composition of the Gospels? On the chief points they are as clear as one could wish.

St. Irenaeus declares that "Matthew published a Gospel writing among the Hebrews, in their tongue, at the time when Peter and Paul were announcing the glad tidings at Rome and were founding the Church. After their departure,[114] Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke, Paul's companion, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by Paul. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who reclined on His breast, also published the Gospel, whilst staying at Ephesus in Asia." [115]

He adds that whoever refuses assent to these writings and to their authors contemns the friends of the Lord, despises the Lord Jesus Himself and God the Father, after the manner of heretics. Further on [116] he repeats that there are only four genuine, trustworthy Gospels. Nor is this all: in the extant

[113] Born in 186, died about 255.

[114] This is the literal translation of the Greek word ἔξοδος, which may also mean "death."

[115] *Adv. Haer.*, III, i, 2.

[116] *Ibid.*, III, xi, 8–9.

fragments of his writings he quotes about four hundred passages taken from our four Gospels,[117] and these citations show that the text which the holy Doctor had before his eyes did not differ from ours. Could one desire more precise evidence?

Clement of Alexandria likewise mentions, in the clearest terms, the four canonical Gospels as having been an object of faithful transmission, going from hand to hand without interruption from the very time of the Apostles themselves. At the same time he protests against the freedom with which some venturesome men would distort certain texts of these Holy Books.[118] He is particularly explicit in a passage of his *Hypotyposes,* preserved by Eusebius,[119] where he records with great exactness the period and circumstances of the composition of the Gospels. He adds that he had these details from an "ancient," whom he does not name.

Origen, in the first book of his commentaries on St. Matthew, speaks of the "four Gospels which alone have been received without opposition (ἀναντιῤῥητα) in the whole Church of God and beneath the heaven," and he asserts that he holds this fact from tradition. In his first homily on St. Luke he writes no less explicitly: "The Church of God approves only the four Gospels."

Tertullian also pays glowing homage to the authenticity and authority of the canonical Gospels. Independently of the direct quotations that he makes at every turn,[120] he mentions these Gospels with the greatest respect as being alone genuine. The following declaration is justly celebrated: "The Apostolic instrument [*i.e.,* the Gospel] has for authors the Apostles . . . and Apostolic men [who wrote it] not by themselves, but with the Apostles and according to the Apostles. . . . Among the Apostles, John and Matthew communicate the

[117] Cf. Tischendorf, *Wann wurden unsere Evangelien verfasst?* p. 8.
[118] *Stromata,* IV, 41.
[119] *H. E.,* VI, xiv, 1. We shall have occasion to quote it later.
[120] Several hundred, according to the calculations of Tischendorf, *op. cit.,* p. 8.

faith to us; among the Apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it.[121] . . . The authority of the Apostolic churches . . . takes the Gospels under its protection; whence it follows that we have the Gospels by those churches and according to them." [122]

This statement is very important, because it shows to what a point Tertullian, like St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, was careful to admit, as "Gospel instrument," only the books that had passed through the watchful and faithful hands of tradition, going back to the authors of the Gospels themselves.

The Canon of Muratori[123] is a list which enumerates, often with the addition of a little commentary, the books received as canonical by the Christians of Rome at the time when it was compiled, about the last third of the second century.[124] Unfortunately the precious manuscript has reached us only in a partially mutilated form; this circumstance explains why it contains no direct mention of the First or Second Gospel. But, in telling us that the "Third Gospel" was written by the physician Luke, companion of Paul, and the "Fourth Gospel" by John, one of the disciples, it quite plainly supposes, as everyone agrees, the existence of two others, which, after the evidence mentioned above, can be only those of St. Matthew and St. Mark. This Roman document has likewise high authority.

b) Between the years 130 and 170. Among the witnesses of this period we mention, first of all, the two oldest translations of the New Testament: the Latin version known as *Itala,* and the Syriac version called *Peshitto,* "the Simple." The latter, which was written for the Syrian churches, whose

[121] *Adv. Marcion.,* IV, 2.

[122] *Ibid.,* IV, 5.

[123] So called from the name of the scholar who discovered it in 1740 in the Milan Library.

[124] Between 170 and 200.

territory extended to the Euphrates, is certainly anterior to the close of the second century, and there are good grounds for thinking it goes back to an even earlier date.[125] As for the Italic Version, or *Vetus Latina,* already known to Tertullian, it dates at the latest from the middle of the same century.[126] These two versions contain our four Gospels in a form identical with that which they have to-day. It should be remarked, moreover, that they were officially recognized and approved by the Church and that several of the manuscripts in which they have been preserved surpass the age of the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Gospels.

The period we are examining is that of the first apologists, a time of earnest strife against the violence of paganism and the beginnings of Christian Gnosticism. One of these apologists, Aristides of Athens, addressing Emperor Hadrian about the year 130, in his Defense of Christianity, mentioned by Eusebius [127] and lately rediscovered, refers him to the "writings" of the Christians. These will furnish him, says Aristides, with complete, authentic details about Jesus Christ and His teaching. It is easy to grasp the importance of such an assertion, which presupposes a Gospel literature already spread over the Christian world and the contents of which, according to the summary which Aristides gives, were in conformity with those of our Gospels.

St. Justin Martyr, who was born at Sichem in Palestine, died in 167. He is a much more explicit and precious witness. As Clement of Alexandria did later on, he, too, traveled in search of the truth. In Asia Minor and Egypt, later at Rome,

[125] See Kaulen, *Einleitung in die heiligen Schriften,* 5th ed., I, 173–187; F. C. Burkitt, *Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe,* 1894; A. S. Lewis, *Old Syriac Gospels, or Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe,* 1910.

[126] See Sabatier, O. S. B., *Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinae Versiones Antiquae, seu Vetus Itala et Caeterae . . .* 3 vols. in folio, 1743; Rönsch, *Itala und Vulgata,* 1875; F. C. Burkitt, *The Old Latin and the Itala,* 1896; H. von Soden, *Das Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians,* 1909.

[127] *H. E.,* IV, iii, 1.

he acquired a vast store of information. In his two *Apologies,* dedicated respectively to Emperor Antoninus (*ca.* 150) and his successor, Marcus Aurelius (*cir.* 161), and in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (*ca.* 160), he undertakes to defend the Christian religion against pagans, Jews, and heretics. These works abound in information about the Gospels, which he says were composed by Apostles (St. Matthew and St. John) and disciples of Apostles (St. Mark and St. Luke).[128] From these books, extracts of which were officially read at the Christian meetings before the distribution of the Eucharist,[129] he draws to a considerable extent in setting forth the life and teachings of Christ. It is true that he seldom names his sources, for that practice had not yet become customary;[130] moreover, those whom he was addressing were not Christians. His citations include all shades of exactness. Some of them quote the Gospel text verbatim; others reproduce the text rather freely; others again are mere reminiscences. Because of their importance, they have become in recent times the object of deep studies,[131] which have resulted in this conclusion: "Justin Martyr doubtless used all the Four [Gospels] about the middle of the [second] century."[132] The famous apologist, though here and there using the word "Gospels," more habitually gives those writings the name of "Memoirs of the Apostles." This he does to be better understood by his pagan readers. But there is no doubt that the two expressions are synonymous in his mind, designating the same books, the ones that we still read to-day.

[128] *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 10, 18, 100.

[129] *Apol.,* I, 17.

[130] Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria do likewise in their apologetic writings.

[131] See Th. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons,* I, 463–565; Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents,* Part I, "The Early Use of the Gospels," 1903, pp. 76–93; Baldus, *Das Verhältnis Justin's des Märtyrers zu unseren Evangelien,* 1905.

[132] We quote from a liberal theologian, Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission,* 3d ed., 1910, p. 257.

A little later we come to three writings that enjoy a certain notoriety: the *Second Epistle* falsely attributed to *Pope St. Clement,* the *Shepherd of Hermas,* and the *Ad Autolycum* of St. Theophilus of Antioch. In the first two of these compositions there are frequent quotations, direct and especially indirect, from the canonical Gospels. St. Theophilus, as St. Jerome says, "has left us a monument of his genius by writing in a single work the words of the four Evangelists," [133] that is, composing what to-day we call a Gospel Harmony or Concordance. They also are excellent evidences.

c) Between the years 95 and 130 our witnesses are the Apostolic Fathers, who have been given this name because they were the disciples or immediate successors of the Apostles. They are: St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Papias of Hierapolis, St. Ignatius of Antioch, the author of the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas,* the author of the *Didache* or *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles,* and Pope St. Clement. The passages of their writings referring to the Gospels could be embraced in a few pages; however, the value of this very early testimony, coming from men of weight so closely in touch with Christian origins, so attached to the primitive traditions, and so severe toward anything that strayed therefrom, can scarcely be emphasized enough. In grouping and studying the Scripture texts mentioned by these authors in the way of allusions, reminiscences, and at times quotations strictly so called, but without any indication of their source, one has no difficulty in being convinced that he is in the presence of passages taken from the Gospels.[134]

The *Didache* has been called "a mosaic of texts" [135] drawn from the different parts of the Bible. It several times desig-

[133] *Epist. ad Algas.,* 5.

[134] Cf. *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers,* Clarendon Press, London, 1905.

[135] Dr. F. X. Funk, in *Patres Apostolici,* I, cxxxvi, from which we take the figures that follow.

nates the Gospel as a definite, well-known book, and it quotes about twenty passages from St. Matthew and two from St. Mark, and perhaps contains some allusions to St. John. In the Epistle of St. Clement there have been found twenty-four passages containing Gospel reminiscences. Ten of these are related to the First Gospel, three to the Second, four to the Third, and seven to the Fourth. The small apologetic treatise bearing the title of *Epistle of Barnabas* cites several texts of St. Matthew, one of them using the formula "as it is written." [136] St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his seven Epistles, has ten quotations from St. Matthew, one from St. Luke, five from St. John. In the following lines he is clearly speaking of the Gospel as a book: "I have heard people say: If I do not find that in the archives, in the Gospel, I do not believe. And when I answered: It is written, they replied: That is to be proven." [137] And of course it was proven.

Coming to Papias, we are on richer ground, although we possess only rare fragments of his works. He wrote an exposition of at least a portion of the Gospels, and on the first two Gospels he gives information which we will utilize presently. Lastly, the Letter of St. Polycarp contains eleven quotations or allusions, eight of which refer to St. Matthew, one to St. Mark, and two to St. Luke.

Are not these facts significant, especially if explained in the light of the numerous and positive assertions of the subsequent periods? [138] It is noteworthy that the Apostolic Fathers represent the churches of Rome, Antioch, Smyrna, and Alexandria,[139] and that their direct or indirect quotations presuppose the diffusion of the four Gospels through the entire Christian world of that time.

[136] *Epist. Barn.*, IV, 14.

[137] *Ad Philad.*, VIII, 2.

[138] See Appendix II, *infra*.

[139] It is possible that the *Epistle of Barnabas* was written in the last-named city.

The Church writers who succeeded them are, as we have seen, as explicit as possible on the Apostolic origin of these inspired books. Not only do they show not the slightest doubt on the subject, but their reliance is based on the very sure and certain tradition that preceded them.[140] What they affirm they say they received from their teachers, who had it from the disciples of the Apostles. Thus we approach step by step the period when the Gospels were composed. Under such conditions it was not possible furtively to introduce a fraudulent Gospel literature into the primitive Church.[141] What has at all times set up a sharp line of demarcation between the canonical and the apocryphal Gospels is the belief that the former alone enjoyed authenticity: hence their unique and privileged position. It would have been impossible for them to succeed, as in fact they have done from the beginning, without any serious rival, if they had not offered indubitable guaranties of their Apostolic origin.

When, at the close of the second century, in the face of growing heresies, the Church felt the need of having an official canon of the Sacred Books, she did not compose this list by virtue of edicts, especially in the matter of the Gospels, —as our foes have sometimes unjustly asserted,[142]—but under the direct influence of tradition. The decrees of the councils were issued and the Gospels were "canonized," as some critics express it, only after that tradition had been duly ascertained. As Tertullian asserts,[143] it is the "ancientness," that is, Christian tradition examined at its very source, that solves the problem.

[140] See Appendix I, *infra.*

[141] Cf. H. Boese, S. J., *Die Glaubwürdigkeit unserer Evangelien,* pp. 97–105; Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents,* Part I, pp. 244–277.

[142] Notably A. Harnack, in the discussion between him and Th. Zahn. See Harnack, *Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200,* 1889; Zahn, *Die bleibende Bedeutung des neutestamentlichen Kanons für die Kirche,* 1898. See also Appendix III, *infra.*

[143] *Adv. Marcion.,* IV, 5. St. Irenaeus and Origen speak to the same effect.

We have still to point out an important part of the argument of tradition in support of the Apostolic origin of the Gospels. St. Irenaeus' words on the subject are well known: "So great is the certainty [on this point] that the heretics themselves testify to the Gospels, and each of them endeavors to establish his doctrine by means of these writings. . . . If, then, our foes testify for us and utilize [these books], the proof that we draw therefrom is solid and true." [144]

Basilides, the famous Gnostic, a contemporary of St. Polycarp and St. Ignatius, spread his gross errors in Egypt between 120 and 140. A commentary which he composed on the four Gospels is mentioned by Eusebius [145] and Clement of Alexandria.[146] In the extant fragments of it we meet with very clear allusions to the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. John. Many passages are even introduced by the significant formula: "It is written in the Gospels." [147] Valentinus, who taught the true doctrine at Rome about the middle of the second century and subsequently preached the Gnostic heresy there, accepted the authenticity of the four Gospels,[148] but so distorted their meaning as to be able to base his pernicious teaching on them. The leaders of the numerous branches that sprang from the Gnostic trunk,—among them Ptolemy and Heracleon,[149]—did likewise. St. Irenaeus asserts that the Valentinians used the Fourth Gospel. Marcion,[150] who is even more lamentably famous, composed a single Gospel by which he aimed to replace the other four; but it is

[144] *Adv. Haer.*, III, xi, 8.

[145] *H. E.*, IV, 7.

[146] *Stromata*, IV, 12.

[147] St. Hippolytus, a disciple of St. Irenaeus, explicitly attributes the following lines to Basilides: "He [Jesus] was the true light that enlightens every man coming into this world." See Migne, *Patr. Gr.*, Vol. XVI, col. 331. The text quoted agrees exactly with John 1:9.

[148] See Tertullian, *De Praescript. Haereticor.*, XXX, 38.

[149] St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, ii, 3, 5; VIII, ii, 5; Origen, *Comment. in Ioan.*, II, 8.

[150] Born at the beginning of the second century; died between 165 and 170.

nothing more than a mutilated and re-edited form of St. Luke's work. We know that he was acquainted with the writings of St. Matthew and St. John, since he inserted various passages from them in his work.[151] Lastly Tatian, who, after a brilliant start at Rome, fell into the error of the Encratites or Abstainers, about the year 165 composed his *Diatessaron* (διὰ τεσσάρων, "by the four"), a sort of concordance in which our canonical Gospels are arranged so as to form a single narrative. This work, which was first published in Syriac, for a long time enjoyed a considerable vogue in the churches of Syria.[152]

The fact which we have just noted is surely remarkable. The heretics of the second century believed in the authenticity of the Gospels and strove to present the Gospel text as if it were favorable to their perverse doctrines. "Would it not have been much simpler and more convenient to deny, in the manner of modern Rationalists, the Apostolic origin of these writings, and thus free themselves, once for all, from every objection? Certainly that would have been easier; but so evident and beyond dispute was the conviction then held as to the authenticity of these Gospels that the heretics were obliged to adopt the same attitude towards them." [153]

We had occasion to mention the misuse which the pagan Celsus made of the Gospels. His perpetual allusions to their accounts show that he knew them in their fourfold form, identical with that which we possess to-day. This is another excellent confirmation of the testimony of tradition.

Our readers can now see that St. Irenaeus was not uttering

[151] *E. g.*, Matt. 20:23 (or Mark 10:40); John 13:7, 17, 24. See Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, I, 663–680.

[152] Cf. M. Maher, S. J., *Recent Evidence for the Authenticity of the Gospels: Tatian's Diatessaron*, 1893; A. Hijelt, *Die altsyrische Evangelienübersetzung, Tatian's Diatessaron*, 1903; O. Bardenhewer, *Die altchristliche Litteratur*, I, 242–262.

[153] Knabenbauer, S. J., in the *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, XXIII, 120.

a vain assertion when he spoke of the canonical Gospels as columns which from time immemorial supported the roof of the Catholic Church. They were thus venerated and treated as peerless in the Christian centers of Asia Minor, his native country, and among the Christians of Lyons, where he was bishop.

We have amply established that "unanimously and from a very early period both friends and foes handed down, as an undoubted fact, that the Apostles Matthew and John, and the disciples of Apostles, Mark and Luke, composed Gospels. . . . The tradition that accompanied the four Gospels from the beginning of their diffusion through the Church, between the years 90 and 170, without being once disputed even by the most hostile critics, . . . rests not simply on conjectures, even learned ones, but on undeniable facts." [154]

2. **The intrinsic proofs** confirm and supplement those furnished by tradition. They are divided into two categories: those in the first category are of a more general sort and consider our four Gospels as a whole; the others are more specific and apply to each of these writings separately.

1) In the first place, as to the authenticity of the Gospels, what proofs are to be derived from their general characteristics, those which concern their early appearance, their historical contents, and their language? The question might be put in this form: "When we examine the Gospels with a critical eye, do we find reason to think that they cannot be so early as the date claimed for them, *viz.:* the first age of the Church—the age when Apostles and other eye-witnesses of our Savior's ministry were still alive and accessible to the writers of these narratives?" [155] We certainly fail to discover any reason of this sort.

a) *A priori* we should, of course, expect to find that writ-

[154] Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* I, 175 f.

[155] Salmon, *An Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament,* 9th ed., 1904, p. 101.

ings analogous to our Gospels had appeared at an early date. Christianity spread with extraordinary rapidity, and the chief subject of preaching by the first missionaries was none other than Jesus Christ and His divine mission. Hence there was a deep and ever growing interest in His Person and a desire to know the facts of His life, not only from eloquent speech, the sound of which too quickly vanishes, but also through permanent writings. St. Luke expressly says [156] that there had been attempts from the first to satisfy this legitimate desire. The fact appears so natural that several, even of the most hostile, critics admit it without dispute.

b) The Gospels in their own way also testify to their early appearance. Further on we will describe the political, social, and religious atmosphere in which our Savior lived. It is that of the Palestinian Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A. D. 70) and is thoroughly well known to us, thanks to the historian Josephus, the Talmud, and several recent works.[157] It is also the environment in which the four Evangelists moved with never a mistake, thus showing how familiar they were with it.

We should not fail to note that this date of the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish State is of prime importance, because it created an entirely new order of things for Palestine and its inhabitants. But in the Gospels, aside from certain of the Savior's prophecies which proceeded from His divine foreknowledge, not a single feature reflects a period later than the year 70.[158] The picture which the sa-

[156] Luke 1 : 1–4.

[157] We have already mentioned the principal ones.

[158] Of the First Gospel it has been said: "If the author [when he composed it] had already witnessed the events in question [the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple, etc.], he certainly would have indicated the fact by some remark, and would have drawn a more detailed picture; we would surely feel a shudder running through the whole account." A. Schäfer, *Die Evangelien und die Evangelienkritik*, 2d ed., p. 27. This statement also applies to the Gospels of SS. Mark and Luke.

cred writers draw of the domestic condition of the Jews, their social relations, their worship, their position with regard to Rome, is that which existed before the terrible catastrophe. Moreover, many lifelike and dramatic details reveal the eyewitness or one who has learned directly by word of mouth the events narrated. This gives us the right to suppose that the Evangelists were thoroughly acquainted with the Palestine of the period before the year 70 and that the composition of their writings is certainly anterior to the close of the first century.

c) Their style, considered in a general way, allows us to draw the same conclusion. The particular, so-called Hellenistic Greek[159] in which their writings have reached us, is much like that of the Septuagint, which itself has a very pronounced Semitic coloring. The vocabulary, as a whole, is Greek, but several Aramaic expressions have slipped in and a fairly large number of Greek words are used with a Hebrew meaning.[160] Frequently, too, the sentence structure is decidedly Semitic, to such an extent that, when reading a Hebrew translation of the Gospels, one might suppose he were reading the original text. The Greek of the Gospels has the flavor of the Palestinian soil. This was exactly the language

[159] Of late the style of the Gospels has been the object of considerable study. When it is compared with the literary fragments, specimens of which are contained in the *ostraca,* papyri, and inscriptions of the same period, it seems, contrary to what was long believed, that it did not form a separate dialect, peculiar to the Greek translators of the Old Testament and the authors of the New, but that it does not differ, save for its Hebraisms and a few other peculiarities, from the Greek speech called κοινή ("common") with an Attic and Ionian base, which, following Alexander the Great's conquests and the wars of his successors, spread in the Mediterranean regions, especially to the East. Cf. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek,* 3d ed., 1910; F. Blass, *Grammatik des neutestam. Griechisch,* 4th ed., 1913; A. Deissmann, *Bibelstudien, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprache, des Schrifttums und der Religion des hellenistischen Judentums und des Urchristentums,* 1895, and *Neue Bibelstudien . . .* 1897; L. C. Fillion, *L'Étude de la Bible, Lettres à un Jeune Prêtre,* 1921, pp. 170–176.

[160] E. g., ξηρά, "dry," to designate the land; δύναμις, in the sense of miracle; σάρξ, "flesh," to designate the body.

spoken in the middle and latter half of the first century by Christian neophytes of Jewish birth or allied to Judaism.

2) Let us now take the Gospels separately and see what each has to say on the subject of its composition.

a) *St. Matthew's Gospel.* Tradition is especially abundant in what concerns this Gospel. It tells us, not only that it was composed by Levi, the publican, who became the Apostle St. Matthew (Papias, St. Pantaenus, St. Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, etc.), but also that it was published as the first of the four in Palestine, before its author left that country to carry the knowledge of Christ to other lands (Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, etc.). Tradition also informs us that St. Matthew intended it for those of his compatriots, Palestinian Jews, who were converted to Christianity, and that his purpose was to strengthen their faith (St. Irenaeus, Eusebius of Caesarea, etc.). Lastly, tradition tells us that it was written, not in Greek, as were the other three, but in Hebrew. St. Augustine eloquently sums up this unbroken chain of evidence when he writes that, "according to what the whole Church says, St. Matthew's Gospel narrative has been handed down by a most secure succession from the hands of the Apostles to the bishops of our own day."[161] This assertion, made fifteen hundred years ago, is admirably confirmed on many points by the intrinsic study of the First Gospel.

Albert Réville considered "as favorable to its authenticity the circumstance that Matthew had been a tax-gatherer (publican) . . . the duties of that office presupposing a certain amount of education."[162] The technical expression, "coin of the tribute,"[163] recalls the former tax-collector. Furthermore, the Evangelist's Jewish origin is shown constantly in his writing: by his aim and his language, as we shall show

[161] *Contra Faustum,* XXVIII, 2.

[162] *Études Critiques sur l'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu,* p. 109.

[163] Matt. 22:19: τὸ νομίσμα τοῦ κήνσου (Vulg., *numisma census*). St. Mark and St. Luke mention simply the Roman *denarius.*

presently; by certain characteristic expressions (*e. g.,* "the heavenly Father" or "the Father who is in Heaven," which occurs about twenty times; "the Kingdom of Heaven," about thirty-five times—a form of expression very familiar to the Jews of that time—in place of the synonymous "Kingdom of God," clearer to the Græco-Romans and for that reason used by St. Mark and St. Luke); by his acquaintance with the Old Testament, which he quotes about forty-five times; by his no less remarkable knowledge of Jewish customs and institutions (feasts, 26:2; 27:62; fasting, 9:14; ablutions, 15:1; mourning, 9:23; wedding ceremonies, 9:15; 25:1, etc.; religious rites, such as fringes and phylacteries, 23:5, etc.). D. F. Strauss acknowledges that "this Gospel, more than any other, bears the impress of Jewish nationality. . . . Its author calls Jerusalem the Holy City, the Temple, the Holy Place (*Matt.* 4:5; 27:53), whereas the others call them simply the City or the Temple, or employ some other designation that does not permit the epithet 'holy' ";[164] and a score of other similar examples.

Though it is difficult, by a direct inspection of the First Gospel, to fix the precise date of its composition, such a study does at least show with all possible clearness that its author, in writing it, pursued principally a doctrinal and apologetic aim, which consisted in demonstrating that Jesus was the Messias foretold by the prophets and sprung from the race of David. In another place he wrote: "Jesus fulfilled the great Messianic ideal of the prophets feature for feature: this is the basic thought on which everything in St. Matthew's account rests, with which everything is connected. This well-marked tendency of his is plainly to be seen through all the events in the narrative. . . . At the very start the Evangelist traces Jesus' genealogy so as to bring out His relation-

[164] *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus,* French trans., I, 147 f.

ship to David and Abraham, from whom the Messias must be descended, according to the oracles of old. Often and in a most particular way he mentions the Old Testament writings to show that Jesus fulfilled such or such a Messianic text. The introductory formulas that he uses are significant: 'All this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet' (*Matt.* 1:22; 2:15, 23; 4:14, etc.); 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken . . .' (*Matt.* 2:17; 27:9, etc.)" [165] The sacred author does not for a moment lose sight of the end he has in view, but directs his whole work and its details towards it with remarkable regularity. Naturally it is not for converted Greeks or Romans that he intends his thesis, but for his former coreligionists of Palestine who, like himself, have become Christians.

The language in which this Gospel was first written leads us to the same conclusion. Tradition is unanimous on this point: St. Matthew wrote his account in Hebrew or, more exactly, in Aramaic, the national idiom then in use by the Jews of Palestine.[166] To this as to the other three Gospels are applicable the remarks we made above about the style of the canonical Gospels. We may here mention in particular the expression "and behold," which St. Matthew uses thirty times; "to swear by," used seven times; "until this day," an

[165] Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Matthieu; Introduction Critique et Commentaires*, p. 17.

[166] As will be explained further on, Hebrew, strictly so called, had long since become a dead language for most of the Jews. This was so far true that, in the religious services, it was necessary to translate into Aramaic the sacred texts which were read to the people. The few scholars who think that St. Matthew wrote in Hebrew are certainly mistaken. There are other critics who flatly contradict the tradition and say that the original language of the Gospel was Greek. Their chief argument is based on the relative purity of the Greek text in which St. Matthew's work has come down to us. But this purity is most simply explained by the ability of the translator. The primitive Aramaic text disappeared very early, simultaneously with the Judeo-Christian churches for which it was intended.

expression dear to the Old Testament writers; without reckoning several Aramaic expressions, such as *raca, corban, Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani.*

b) *St. Mark's Gospel.* Summing up the earliest tradition regarding the composition of this Gospel, we obtain the following results. Its author is John Mark, a Jew, a native of Jerusalem, who became St. Peter's disciple and companion (Papias, St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, etc.). The Gospel was written in Greek (Origen, etc.), at Rome, at the request of the Christians of that city, who wished to have in writing an abridgment of the preaching of the Prince of the Apostles as they had heard it (Papias, St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, etc.); in point of time it was the second to appear, the first being that of St. Matthew (Origen, etc.).

We know of St. Mark and his relations with St. Peter from several passages in the New Testament. It was to the house of St. Mark's mother in Jerusalem that the Prince of the Apostles, upon quitting the jail where Herod Agrippa had imprisoned him, went to announce his miraculous liberation.[167] In his First Epistle (5: 13) St. Peter calls Mark his "son," no doubt because he had baptized him; he has Mark accompany him on a number of his journeys, and in particular takes him with him to Rome.[168] The strongly Hebraistic language of the Second Gospel and its author's very accurate knowledge of Palestinian geography and Jewish customs clearly attest his Israelitic origin.

But the most striking intrinsic proof concerns what we said above, in speaking of the tradition, about the chief source to which St. Mark had recourse for the writing of his Gospel. This is how St. Clement of Alexandria expresses himself on this point: "After Peter had publicly taught the word [the

[167] Acts 12: 12–17.
[168] 1 Pet. 5: 13.

Gospel] at Rome . . . a great number of his hearers begged Mark to put in writing the things he had said, because Mark had accompanied him from afar and remembered his preaching. After composing the Gospel, he delivered it to those who had asked him for it. When Peter learned this, he offered neither hindrance nor encouragement." [169]

It is precisely because St. Mark thus utilized the preaching of the Prince of the Apostles as his principal document, that St. Justin gives to the Second Gospel the significant title of "Memoirs of Peter." [170]

The control of this proof is relatively easy. In the Acts of the Apostles [171] we have the summary of a discourse so characteristic of St. Peter that it is rightly regarded as the outline of his preaching whenever he addressed pagans. Naturally it passes lightly over Christ's connection with the Old Testament and His discussions with the Pharisees, placing in sharper relief the acts and especially the miracles by which the Savior showed His divine power. St. Peter opens his sermon with the Baptism of Christ. Into the discourse he puts all the warmth of his soul and all his Apostolic vigor. Such is precisely the distinctive stamp of the Second Gospel. It leaves aside the account of Christ's infancy and hidden life and begins with the ministry of the Baptist. Then in a narrative of extraordinary force and luster, it quickly passes from one deed to another, with much insistence on Christ's miracles, especially the curing of persons possessed by evil spirits. This is a truly admirable mode of development and quite in keeping with the manner of St. Peter, from whom Mark obtained those minute, picturesque details which he points out on every page,[172] with reference to time, place, persons, language, etc.

[169] In Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, 14. Cf. Papias, *ibid.*, III, 39, and St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, i, 1.

[170] *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 106.

[171] Acts 10:34–43.

[172] See Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Marc*, pp. 15–17.

St. Mark, of course, had not personally witnessed the events which he relates; but he had contemplated them through the eyes of his illustrious teacher.

Note this remarkable circumstance: the information regarding St. Peter is more plentiful here than in the other Gospels. For example, St. Mark describes the threefold denial with extraordinary exactness and wealth of detail. It is true, he omits certain creditable or important facts in the Gospel life of the Prince of the Apostles: notably his walking on the water (*Matt.* 15:28–30), his prominent part in the miracle of the stater (*Matt.* 17:24–26), his glorious designation as the firm rock on which the Church would be built (*Matt.* 16:17–19; *John* 1:42), the special prayer that Jesus offered to His Father that Peter's faith might not fail (*Luke* 22:31 f.). But, as Eusebius of Caesarea surmised,[173] it is probable that these omissions show, in their own way, St. Peter's share in the composition of the Second Gospel: his modesty would have led him to pass over in silence in his preaching, so faithfully reproduced by his disciple, many incidents in which he was especially conspicuous.

Unlike St. Matthew, St. Mark did not write for Christians who had come from the ranks of Judaism, but for converted Gentiles. A rapid glance over his narrative shows this. When he uses Aramaic words,[174] he is careful to translate them for his readers. He gives explanations of several Jewish practices and of other matters which persons alien to Judaism might have difficulty in understanding.[175] He does not even mention the name of the Jewish Law; nowhere does he base any argument on Old Testament texts.

[173] *Demonstratio Evangelica,* III, v, 89.

[174] *Boanerges,* 3:17; *Talitha cumi,* 5:41; *Corban,* 7:11; *Bartimaeus,* 10:46; *Abba,* 14:36; *Eloi Eloi lamma sabacthani,* 15:34.

[175] For example, he speaks of "the first day of the unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the pasch," 14:12; he says that the Parasceve was "the day before the Sabbath," 15:42; that Mount Olivet is "over against the Temple," 13:3, etc.

It was, indeed, among Romans and for Romans that Mark wrote his Gospel. One could divine this from various details. Latin words in Greek dress appear rather frequently in the course of his narrative.[176] After mentioning a Greek coin, he adds that it is equal to the Roman *quadrans* (12:42). In another place (15:21) he says that Simon of Cyrene was "the father of Alexander and of Rufus," a circumstance of little importance in itself, but interesting from our present viewpoint if we remember that Rufus lived in Rome.[177] The intrinsic argument has, therefore, an undoubted value in confirming the teaching of tradition on the origin of St. Mark's Gospel.

c) *The Third Gospel* furnishes us with equally instructive details. Tradition (St. Irenaeus, the Canon of Muratori, Eusebius of Caesarea, etc.), unanimously attributes it to St. Luke, an inhabitant of Antioch (Eusebius of Caesarea). This writer did not personally know Our Lord (Muratorian Canon). After his conversion to Christianity he became the intimate disciple and companion of St. Paul (all the early authors), whose preaching he has handed down in his Gospel, just as St. Mark communicates St. Peter's preaching to us. His Gospel was published after St. Matthew's and St. Mark's (St. Irenaeus, Muratorian Canon, etc.). These various items are fully confirmed by an examination of the Third Gospel, of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul.

St. Luke's pagan origin is clearly indicated by the Apostle of the Gentiles, who contrasts him and some other disciples with several Christians,—among them is St. Mark,—who had formerly been Jews.[178] St. Luke himself, in the first lines of his Gospel,[179] acknowledges that he is not reckoned among

[176] Cfr. 5:9, 15; 6:27; 12:14, 42; 15:15, 39, etc.
[177] Cfr. Rom. 16:13.
[178] Col. 4:11–14.
[179] Luke 1:1–4.

those who had witnessed the beginning of the Gospel events. St. Paul (*Col.* 4: 14), in a most friendly way, calls him "Luke, the most dear physician." But the Third Gospel itself bears fairly numerous traces of its author's former profession. An English scholar, Mr. Hobart, has written a special monograph[180] to show this fact and, although some details are exaggerated, the thesis itself is fundamentally indisputable, as Harnack proved a few years ago.[181] There have been drawn up long lists of expressions from which it is deduced that the author of our Gospel was acquainted with the technical language of Greek medicine and that he was himself a Greek physician. It will suffice here to note a few instances, justly regarded as characteristic. St. Luke is the only one to quote Christ's words, "Physician, heal thyself" (4: 3). He is also the only one to say that St. Peter's mother-in-law was taken with a "great fever" (4: 38) and that the first leper healed by Our Lord was "full of leprosy" (5: 12). In relating the incident of the woman with a flow of blood, St. Mark heaps sarcasm on the physicians who had poorly cared for her and impoverished her, whereas St. Luke shows himself somewhat less severe towards his former colleagues.[182]

We now come to an even more important fact. At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, the writing of which Christian tradition unanimously attributes to him,[183] St. Luke furnishes us with a manifest proof that he is truly the author of the Third Gospel. Addressing an illustrious Christian personage, named Theophilus, he says: "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all things which Jesus began to do

[180] *The Medical Language of St. Luke,* 1882.

[181] *Lukas der Arzt, der Verfasser des dritten Evangeliums und der Apostelgeschichte,* 1906. See especially pp. 122–137.

[182] Mark 5: 25 f.; Luke 8: 43.

[183] Harnack has become the very able and earnest defender of this proposition, and he proves it well founded by intrinsic arguments. See the two volumes: *Die Apostelgeschichte* and *Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte . . . ,* 1911; also the work mentioned above, *Lukas der Arzt,* pp. 14–21.

and to teach, until the day on which, giving commandments by the Holy Ghost to the Apostles, whom he had chosen, he was taken up." [184] It was not possible for the sacred writer to affirm more clearly that he had published, before the Acts of the Apostles, another volume which, according to the short description he gives of it, does not differ from the Gospel which bears his name and is dedicated to this same Theophilus.[185] In fact, notwithstanding the differences in the subject treated, the numerous resemblances in substance and form prove that these two books are truly the work of one and the same author, who, in accordance with his promise,[186] made serious inquiries before writing and throughout acquits himself as an excellent historian.

The intimacy of the relations between St. Luke and the Apostle of the Gentiles is established by internal argument no less clearly than by tradition. Repeatedly, without naming himself, yet in such a definite manner that no one could misunderstand him, the author of the Acts [187] and of the Third Gospel briefly relates the journeys he made in company with the illustrious Apostle.[188] We have already seen that St. Paul also mentions this relationship, speaking of it again in his last Epistle shortly before his martyrdom.[189]

"Luke, the companion of Paul," says St. Irenaeus, "set down in writing the Gospel preached by Paul." [190] Certain facts, which have attracted the attention of interpreters for some time past, remarkably confirm this testimony of tradition in demonstrating that the Third Gospel was really composed by a disciple of the Apostle Paul. As a preacher of the

[184] Acts 1 : 1 f.
[185] Cf. Luke 1 : 1–4.
[186] Luke 1 : 3.
[187] Acts 16 : 10–17; 20 : 5–26; 21 : 1–17; 27 : 2; 28 : 16.
[188] Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, 14.
[189] 2 Tim. 4 : 11.
[190] *Adv. Haer.*, III, 1. Cfr. Tertullian, *Contra Marcion.*, IV, 2.

Christian religion, St. Paul was particularly distinguished for the universal note of his teaching. This characteristic also appears very strikingly in St. Luke's Gospel. Without disputing, any more than did his great teacher, the Jews' primordial right to the salvation brought by Christ,[191] he is frequently glad to emphasize the world-wide goal of Christianity, the idea of the redemption of the whole human race by Our Lord Jesus Christ, without individual or racial distinction. One might say that his whole book is a development of these words of the Savior: "That penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." [192] The parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke* 10: 30–37), the words of Christ praising a Samaritan leper (17: 16), the parable of the Prodigal Son (15: 11–32), the touching incident of the sinful woman who anointed the Savior's feet (7: 37–50), the consoling words of the dying Christ to the good thief (23: 43), and many another like detail,[193] repeatedly attest this tendency. A no less characteristic though isolated fact is found in the almost verbal agreement in the account of the institution of the Eucharist as recorded by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (11: 23–25) and as related by St. Luke in his Gospel (22: 19 f.). This agreement, combined with the slight differences which appear in the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark,[194] is certainly not accidental. Lastly, the resemblances between the writings of St. Paul and those of St. Luke are not only to be observed in the thought, but reach to the very expressions. One could

[191] Cf. Rom. 1: 16; 2: 10, etc. St. Luke is the only one who says that the shepherds of Bethlehem were the first adorers of the Infant Savior.

[192] Luke 24: 47.

[193] Let us cite in addition the words, "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles," in the *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke 2: 32), Christ's genealogy going back to Adam (3: 23–38), the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (18: 10–14), the incident of Zacheus (19: 1–10).

[194] Matt. 26: 28; Mark 14: 22–24.

easily fill whole pages in enumerating the locutions common to the Apostle and his disciple.[195]

The early Fathers also say that St. Luke intended his Gospel for the Greek churches, for Gentile converts.[196] And this conclusion is confirmed by an attentive perusal of the book, which contains a great number of explanations quite useless for Jews, but indispensable for Gentiles; for instance, 4:31: "[Jesus] went down into Capharnaum, a city of Galilee"; 8: 26: "And they sailed to the country of the Gerasens, which is over against Galilee"; 22: 1: "Now the feast of unleavened bread, which is called the Pasch, was at hand." It is also for his Græco-Roman readers that the Evangelist dates the birth of Christ and the appearance of the precursor by the reign of the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius.[197] On the other hand, he passes over in silence certain details that would have been of direct interest only to the Jews, such as ablutions, Pharisaical hypocrisy, etc.

As to the date of the Third Gospel, the internal evidence enables us to fix it approximately. The Acts of the Apostles was finished near the end of St. Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, that is, according to the most common opinion, in 63. In fact the narrative stops abruptly (28: 30 f.), leaving the Apostle a prisoner for two years previous. His arrest and imprisonment having taken place about the year 61, it was therefore before 63 that St. Luke composed his Gospel.

d) *St. John's Gospel.* Tradition gives us the following information. This Gospel is the work of St. John, the beloved disciple of Christ, the son of Zebedee and brother of St. James the Greater (St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Canon of Muratori, Tertullian, etc.), who wrote it at

[195] Let us remark in passing that St. Luke's style, while not perfect, has a characteristic stamp of purity and distinction which is lacking in the style of the other three Evangelists.

[196] Cfr. Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, 4; St. Jerome, *Epist. ad Damas.*, XX.

[197] Luke 2: 1, 3: 1.

Ephesus (St. Irenaeus, Eusebius of Caesarea, etc.), where he had settled after St. Paul's death. This Gospel has a very special character, which distinguishes it from the Synoptic Gospels (Clement of Alexandria). It was published a considerable while after the other three, at the close of the first century, to refute the errors of Cerinthus and the early Gnostics.[198]

What answer does the Gospel itself give to a sincere inquirer consulting it on these points? It is eloquently expressed by Bishop Bougaud: "That portrait of a unique Being, drawn by a unique painter; those exact details indicating an eyewitness; that very signature of St. John, so modest, but all the more striking; that spirit, that heart, that genius of St. John exhaling throughout all those pages an indescribable fragrance of truth which puts doubt to flight; then, too, that lofty, sublime, pure, living figure of Christ, which could have been observed only by a witness with St. John's heart and spirit, with his sincerity and tenderness; . . . all this is another unquestionable proof of the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel." [199]

We will try to show, by a few summary indications, that this assertion is nowise exaggerated. The author does not name himself, but from the *ensemble* as well as from the details of his narrative we may conclude that he was a Jew, that Palestine was his native country, that he had seen with his own eyes most of the events to be found in his account, that he was a member of the Apostolic College, and, lastly, that he was none other than John, the chosen disciple of Jesus.[200]

The author was a Jew by birth. His style alone would be

[198] For all these details, see Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Jean,* pp. xiv–xxv.

[199] Bougaud, *Jésus-Christ,* 4th ed., pp. 106 f.

[200] This argument will be found developed in F. Westcott, *St. John's Gospel,* pp. xv–xxviii; Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Jean,* pp. xxv–xxxiii; Lepin, *L'Origine du Quatrième Évangile,* pp. 285–493.

enough to convince us of this fact, for, although the book is written in a fairly correct Greek, a multitude of clues—few or none of those particles and periods so dear to real Greeks; a large number of Hebraic expressions, etc—reveal a writer who thinks first in Hebrew or Aramaic. Furthermore, while intended for Christians of the Hellenic world,[201] the Fourth Gospel treats questions from a thoroughly Jewish point of view. For example, Palestine is Christ's country (1:11); the Temple at Jerusalem is the palace of the theocratic King (2:16); salvation comes from the Jews (4:22). The narrative from beginning to end is grounded on the Old Testament as its natural basis.[202] Like St. Matthew, the author quotes several ancient prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.[203] He is thoroughly familiar with the civil [204] and religious [205] customs of the Jews. It would take pages to develop all these significant details.

The author was a Palestinian Jew. This is shown, first, by his intimate knowledge of the country that constitutes the scene of action in his narrative. Localities, great or small, are constantly characterized by minute notes, the correctness of which has been justly admired. Thus he knows that there were two villages by the name of Bethania, one of them situated across the Jordan (1:28) and the other fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem (11:18); that at Ennon, near Salim, there was much water (3:23); that Ephrem is near the desert (11:54). The whole land is familiar to him, as may be seen

[201] A fact which is shown by the translation into Greek of Hebrew words quoted here and there (1:38, 42; 4:25; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13, 17, etc.), by the explaining of certain Jewish customs (2:6, 13; 5:1, etc.), by the supplying of information with regard to several places in Palestine (1:28; 6:1), etc.

[202] See in particular John 3:14, the brazen serpent; 6:32, the manna; 19:36, the Paschal lamb, etc.

[203] Cfr. 2:22; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36, etc.

[204] Marriage, 2:6; burial, 11:44; 19:40.

[205] Circumcision and the Sabbath, 5:1; 7:12 f., etc.; legal impurities, 18:28; purifications and ablutions, 1:25; 2:6; 3:22, etc.; excommunication, 9:22.

from his remarks on Cedron (18:1), Calvary (19:17, 20), and many other places.

This Palestinian Jew was an eye-witness of the events that he relates; for him, as for the author of the First Gospel, tradition does not point to any special document or source. His book asserts this fact in three different passages: 1:14, "The Word was made flesh . . . and we saw His glory";[206] 19:34 f., "One of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it, hath given testimony"; 21:24, "This is that disciple who giveth testimony of these things, and hath written these things." The vivid and truly dramatic character of the accounts very frequently evidences an eye-witness. John the Baptist looks upon Jesus, who is passing a short distance away (1:35); Jesus, hearing someone following him, turns around (1:38); after Mary pours the precious ointment on His feet, an exquisite odor pervades the whole house (12:3), etc. Circumstances of time and number are often most carefully determined, communicating a singular sharpness of outline to the events.[207]

The author belonged to the Apostolic College. He seems to have been familiar with the Savior's closest entourage and with the Divine Master Himself too well not to have been one of the Twelve. He knew some of the Apostles, even to their very thoughts.[208] He was closely associated with several of them, especially with Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael (Bartholomew).[209] He early penetrated the odious feelings of the traitor Judas.[210] He knows the words which the Apostles exchange among themselves and with the Savior.[211] But it is

[206] See 1 John 1:1–3, where this same thought is strongly emphasized.
[207] John 1:37, 40; 2:6; 4:6, 18, 52; 5:5; 6:9, 19; 12:5; 18:27, etc.
[208] John 2:11, 17, 22; 4:27; 6:19, 61; 12:16; 13:22, 28; 20:9, etc.
[209] See chaps. I and XXI.
[210] John 6:71 f.; 12:6; 13:2, 27.
[211] John 4:31, 33; 9:2; 11:8, 12, 16; 16:18, 29, etc.

particularly with regard to Jesus that he possesses a rich treasury of memories, showing that he had lived in His immediate society. He had been attached to Him for a long time (1:35–40); he had accompanied Him from the banks of the Jordan to Cana of Galilee, then to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and again to Galilee (chaps. 2–4). Having become "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he learned to read in the Master's heart the feelings that animated Him[212] and the motives that prompted His conduct.[213]

The author is none other than the Apostle St. John. At the end of the book (21:24) we read this note, appended by the "ancients" of the church of Ephesus: "This is that disciple who giveth testimony of these things, and hath written these things; and we know that his testimony is true." These words, by which it was intended officially to designate the writer to whom we owe the Fourth Gospel, apply to the beloved disciple, who is mentioned in the preceding verses, and the earliest tradition unanimously affirms that this disciple is the Apostle John. Besides, among the Twelve, three were privileged, Peter, James, and John, as the Synoptics inform us. But the first two of these died long before the publication of the Fourth Gospel. Furthermore, the character of this Gospel does not at all correspond with the nature of the Prince of the Apostles, while it is perfectly in harmony with that of St. John, as we know him from his Epistles and from certain isolated items of information in tradition.

So we see what strength there is to the evidence which the Fourth Gospel itself furnishes. It indicates its own purpose (20:31): "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name." It was a doctrinal and at the same time a practical aim, to which all the elements of the

[212] Cfr. 11:33, 38; 13:21, etc.
[213] John 2:24 f.; 4:1–3; 5:6; 6:6, 15; 13:1, 3, 11, etc.

narrative converge. By proving the divinity of Christ, St. John refuted, as the Fathers say, the first Gnostics, who obstinately denied this great doctrine.[214]

3. *The date of the composition of the Gospels.* In the foregoing pages we have demonstrated the authenticity of these books, their antiquity and Apostolic origin. Can we go further and point out when they were composed? We can, if there is question of approximate dates, but not if it be required to supply an absolutely exact date. In fact, on this point we are almost wholly dependent on tradition; but the voice of tradition is not sufficiently clear on this question, which is a secondary one, to allow us to answer it with complete certitude. We will try, however, to solve it, considering each of the Four Gospels in turn.

a) For St. Matthew we have the apparently contradictory testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea and of St. Irenaeus. Eusebius[215] refers the publication of the First Gospel to the year (A. D. 41) when the Apostles left Jerusalem and scattered to carry the glad tidings afar.[216] Several early ecclesiastical writers accept this date or designate some other date near it. St. Irenaeus, on the contrary, puts off the time of its composition to about twenty years later, for he says that "Matthew published his Gospel when Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and were founding the church there."[217] As St. Paul did not go to Rome for the first time until the year 61, St. Matthew's Gospel would not have appeared before that date. Among Christian critics some accept one of these opinions, some the other. The greater part of them, however, prefer the opinion of Eusebius, which seems the more probable. Other commentators have adopted an intermediate date.

b) Tradition is likewise inconclusive on the question of the

[214] On the critics' attacks upon the Fourth Gospel, see Appendix IV, *infra.*
[215] *H. E.*, III, xxiv, 6.
[216] According to some authors, the year 42 or 43.
[217] *Adv. Haer.*, III, i, 2.

exact time when St. Mark's Gospel was composed. It was during the lifetime of St. Peter, according to Clement of Alexandria;[218] in the reign of Claudius, says Eusebius,[219] that is between 41 and 44. But again St. Irenaeus expresses a contradictory opinion, at least in appearance, when he adds these words to the text we have just quoted: "After their departure [*i. e.*, of Peter and Paul], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also consigned Peter's preaching to writing." The expression "after their departure" is ambiguous; it may mean the death of the two Apostles, but it may also be intended to designate an ordinary departure, the exact date of which cannot be determined. Hence again we have two distinct opinions among Christian exegetes, some of whom adopt the year 42, others 67.[220]

c) As to St. Luke's Gospel, while tradition is hardly more explicit or certain in fixing the date of its composition, at least we have, at the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, a valuable datum, which we pointed out above. Since St. Paul's companion published this "second writing" at Rome about the year 63, his "first writing," which is none other than the third Gospel, must have been published before then, doubtless during the Apostle of the Gentiles' first imprisonment (61–63).

d) In the unanimous consensus of the Fathers, St. John's Gospel "came the last of all." Some of the Fathers are more precise and put its composition in the reign of Domitian (81–86),[221] preferably at the end of that reign. This date is quite probable. St. Augustine speaks of the reign of Nerva (96–98).[222]

[218] See *supra*, page 54.

[219] *H. E.*, II, 15.

[220] Let us mention also an intermediate opinion, not without some likelihood, which places the composition of this Gospel between 52 and 62.

[221] St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, etc.

[222] See Appendix V, *infra*.

IV. The Integrity of the Gospels

This question is closely connected with that of authenticity, integrity being a necessary complement of authenticity. To establish that our four Gospels have an Apostolic origin and are really the work of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John is not enough; we must also prove that they have come down to us without essential alterations, as they left their authors' hands.

In favor of the integrity of the Gospels, considered as a whole, we will first advance what is called a presumption which rests on the duly verified history of the primitive Church. We have had occasion to mention the protests and threats of the early Doctors against those who took the liberty of altering the text of the Sacred Scriptures.[223] It is with indignant vehemence that Tertullian[224] reproaches Marcion for mutilating the Gospel of St. Luke. Such sentiments were shared by all Christians, who clung with all their might to the ancient traditions and showed themselves singularly uncompromising when it seemed to them that the integrity of the Sacred Books was being attacked, even in accidental details.[225]

Beyond this presumption there is the proof drawn from three undeniable facts. It is, in a way, a material demonstration added to the moral proof. (1) The original manuscripts

[223] See also St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 73; Dionysius of Corinth (*circa* 170), in Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, 2.

[224] *Contr. Marcion.*, IV, 2.

[225] With reference to this matter St. Augustine (*Epist.*, LXXI) relates a characteristic incident. St. Jerome in his translation of the Old Testament had used the word *hedera*, "ivy," in the Book of Jonas (4:6–10) in place of the word *cucurbita*, "gourd," which had theretofore been the reading in the ancient Latin version. One day a certain bishop in his cathedral was publicly reading this passage according to the new translation; at once there began a commotion among the people present because they imagined he was altering the sacred text of his own accord. From this episode we see that the Christians of that early day would allow no one to touch the wording of the Gospels, which they knew had come from the Apostles.

of the Gospels undoubtedly disappeared very quickly. But copies were made quite early, which increased in number on every side. A relatively large number of them has reached us, and several of these precious manuscripts go back to the fourth and fifth centuries.[226] This is a remarkable, nay, an exceptional fact, to which we find nothing comparable in the history of classical literature.[227] Now, comparing the text of these various manuscripts with that which we read to-day, we observe that, aside from the variants, of which we will speak presently, it is substantially the same. There could be no better proof of the integrity of our Gospels. (2) The most ancient translations of this text, especially those made into Latin and Syriac in the second century, into Coptic in the third century, into Gothic and Armenian in the fourth and fifth centuries, lead to the same conclusion. Aside from some inconsiderable differences, they reproduce the Greek text as we now have it. (3) We saw that the early Fathers of the second and third centuries often quote the Gospels, sometimes directly, and again in an indirect manner. By uniting all these fragments we could reconstruct a considerable part of our four Gospels, without other differences than those of which we are about to speak.[228]

It is true that between all these manuscripts, versions, and quotations there exist numerous variants, appearing in al-

[226] The most famous are the *Vaticanus,* preserved in the Vatican Library and designated by the letter A (fourth century), the *Sinaiticus* (fourth century), so named because it was discovered in 1859 in the Mount Sinai monastery; the *Alexandrinus* (B, fifth century), now in the British Museum; the *Regius,* or *Codex Ephremi Rescriptus* (C), a palimpsest manuscript now in the National Library at Paris; the *Codex Bezae,* or *Cantabrigiensis* (D), presented to Cambridge University by Theodore Beza.

[227] As one Protestant scholar says, the manuscripts of the most famous classical authors are far more rare and relatively more modern; even of Homer we have no text earlier than the thirteenth century. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament,* 4th ed., 1894, p. 3.

[228] Cf. Tischendorf, *Haben wir den ächten Schrifttext der Evangelien und Apostel?* 1873.

most every verse. It would have required a permanent miracle to preserve, through copies endlessly recopied, the exact primitive text. Mistakes due to the carelessness, distractions, and unskilfulness of copyists slip in everywhere. If it is, even to-day, morally impossible, notwithstanding the attentiveness of printers and proof-readers, to publish a volume unmarred by typographical errors, with all the more reason must we expect that errors of detail will inevitably creep into copies written by hand. Origen complained of it.[229] In reply to the pagan Celsus, who used these variants as a pretext for attacking the groundwork of the sacred narrative, Origen drew attention to the fact that they were of no importance.[230] As a matter of fact, when these variants are examined one by one, they are generally seen to be of a superficial nature and concern especially spelling, the order of words, the presence or omission of an article or particle, etc.[231] Those which directly affect the meaning are rather few and none of them affects the doctrinal or moral content of the Gospels.[232]

Everything, therefore, agrees in showing that the Gospel text has suffered no substantial modification through the ages and that, save for slight, accidental changes, it has been handed down to us in its original, authentic form. From the earliest time the Church, by her most illustrious Doctors, such as Origen and St. Augustine, has piously watched over the preservation of the sacred text and has labored to keep it free from

[229] *In Matth.*, 15:14.

[230] *Contra Celsum*, II, 27.

[231] A text of St. John (8:12) furnishes a most instructive example. We have noticed the following variants in some Greek manuscripts: *αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν, ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς αὐτοῖς, ὁ Ἰησοῦς αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν, ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς.* The words are the same, but arranged in a slightly different order. Cases of this sort are very numerous.

[232] See J. Schäfer, *Die Evangelien und die Evangelienkritik*, 2d ed., p. 16. In their proper place, as the occasion presents itself in the course of the Gospel narrative, we will solve the difficulties that arise from the omission of certain passages of St. Mark (16:10–20), St. Luke (22:42–44), and St. John (7:53–8:11) in important Greek manuscripts.

all dross. For the last three quarters of a century, learned men—Catholics, Protestants, and even Rationalists—have rivaled one another in their zeal to reproduce this text in a somewhat ideal form by restoring it to its pristine purity.[233]

V. The Credibility of the Gospels

The question of credibility is a most interesting one. It has been eloquently and scientifically treated by many contemporary authors.[234] We will undertake to examine only its most important aspects.

For a historian to be judged trustworthy, he must meet certain requirements, which we can reduce to two principal heads: first, he should be competent, that is, well-informed about the matters he relates; secondly, he must be honest and conscientious. It is easy to prove that the Evangelists possessed these two qualities in a preëminent degree.

1. They were well-informed and enjoyed a high degree of competence. Strauss, who has been perhaps the most pernicious adversary of the Gospels, writes: "It would be of decisive weight for the credibility of biblical history if it were demonstrated that it has been told by eye-witnesses."[235] This requirement is fully met so far as the Gospels are concerned: it is the conclusion established in our study of their authenticity. In this sense we have a right to say that a historian's credibility is consequent upon the authenticity of his works.

As members of the Apostolic College, St. Matthew and St. John were close companions of the Savior for about three

[233] The latest critical editions of the New Testament are those published by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, B. Weiss, Nestle, Brandscheid, von Soden, and Vogels. Textual criticism, a science that has been extensively developed for a century past, has given rise to many interesting and useful works. For the Gospels, see especially Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (II, 717–725) and F. Blass, *Ueber die Textkritik im Neuen Testament*, 1904.

[234] We mentioned some of the most recent above.

[235] *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 1835, I, § 13.

years, constantly seeing and hearing Him, being present at His preaching and miracles, living in intimate association with Him. St. John in his First Epistle, which, as many exegetes consider, served, so to speak, as a preface to his Gospel, sets forth in striking terms this special competence of the Apostles to narrate the life of their Master. "That which we have heard," he says, "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you."[236] St. Matthew might justly have uttered a like dictum. Though St. Mark and St. Luke did not have the privilege of being eye-witnesses, yet their authority as historians of Christ was hardly less than that of the two Apostle-Evangelists. Having become the intimate disciples, respectively, of St. Peter and St. Paul, they faithfully reproduce the Apostles' preaching in their accounts, as we said above. They were witnesses by hearing. Then, too, it was feasible for them to consult other sources so as to fill out whatever information they needed. St. Luke, announcing his method in the little prologue at the beginning of his Gospel,[237] certifies that he had "diligently attained to all things" regarding the life of Christ, that he consulted the writings which many had already composed for the same purpose, that he also consulted those who had seen the events with their own eyes—and these witnesses were still very numerous. What more could one desire? In fact, as, in the final analysis, all historical knowledge rests on the attestation of eye-witnesses, it is comforting to see that what the Gospels teach us about Christ goes back to the most reliable source of history.

It is well to recall here another important fact. Whatever

[236] I John 1 : 1–3.
[237] Luke 1 : 1–4.

may have been the exact dates of the composition of the Gospels, the first three were published a rather short time subsequent to the events which they relate: ten, fifteen, twenty-five years, according to the most likely estimates. In the matter of competence, we have, then, a valuable guaranty of their exactness. St. John, it is true, wrote much later; but the memory of this loving disciple had forgotten nothing, as is evident from the numerous details in his pages, which make Jesus live again before our eyes. Tertullian sums up this argument in two vigorous lines: *"Id verius quod prius, id prius quod ab initio, ab initio quod ab apostolis."* [238] The extraordinary competence of the Evangelists cannot be called in question. It would be difficult to find better informed historians.

We have one more remark to add. The elements composing the Gospels are of two kinds: deeds and words. Everybody agrees that the deeds of their own accord stuck in the memory and were unforgetable. Most of the isolated sayings which the Evangelists attribute to Christ are associated with deeds which emphasize them in some way and fix them forever in the memory. As for the discourses, properly so called, the difficulty is only apparent, especially for those related by the Synoptics: so forceful and novel are the thoughts, so incisive and often picturesque is the form, as at once to engrave them indelibly on the mind. What the editors of the Talmud—and God knows what a sorry hodgepodge that work is!—did for the sayings of the ancient rabbis, what the Lazarists did for the sayings of St. Vincent de Paul and the Visitation nuns for those of St. Francis de Sales, we have much more reason to believe the Apostles were able to do for the words of Our Lord, in such a way as faithfully to transmit their substance and their diction.[239] For this reason, despite his many preju-

[238] *Contr. Marcion.*, IV, 5; cfr. St. Augustine, *De Consensu Evangel.*, II, 17, 28.
[239] See Appendix IV with regard to the discourses in St. John's Gospel.

dices, E. Reuss unhesitatingly acknowledges that "the certitude and credibility (of at least the didactic element in the first three Gospels) have no need of proof." [240]

But aside from any reasoned-out demonstration, the Gospels themselves constantly and most plainly proclaim that their authors were well informed. Commentators again and again insist on the remarkable exactness of a large number of details—they are reckoned by the hundreds—referring to circumstances of person, time, and place. It is thus we learn to be acquainted with each of the Apostles, St. Peter's mother-in-law, Jairus, Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, the centurion and his servant, Zacheus, and a score of others. We know that such a miracle took place at Naim, that Christ delivered such a discourse in a synagogue at Capharnaum, that at a certain time John was baptizing at Bethania on the banks of the Jordan and later at Ennon near Salim. Certain incidents, such as the curing of the paralytic [241] and that of the blind men of Jericho,[242] are related with a wealth of picturesque details. Not satisfied with indicating the Savior's words, the Evangelists now and then also mention His gestures,[243] His looks,[244] and even His inner thoughts or feelings.[245] In this way do they show that they are perfectly informed about what they relate.

We can go still farther and give even more palpable proofs of their competence. We refer to the multiple control that has been exercised over their accounts, and always to their credit. In the first place there is the reciprocal control. Since, according to what we have said of their mutual relations, they

[240] *Histoire Évangélique,* pp. 111 f.
[241] Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26.
[242] Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43.
[243] Cfr. Matt. 8:15; Mark 8:33; 9:35; 10:16, 32; Luke 4:20; John 1:36, etc.
[244] Mark 3:5, 34; 5:32; 10:23; 11:11; Luke 6:10.
[245] Mark 3:5; 6:48; 7:34; 8:12, 38; 10:21; John 11:33, 38.

all set forth the same story, it is not a difficult matter to ascertain whether they are in accord with one another. In spite of the differences in detail which have been pointed out above —fewer in the Synoptics, more considerable in the Fourth Gospel—this comparison results in a verification of their substantial harmony from the viewpoint of aim, facts, doctrine, the picture of Christ, and secondary portraits, such as those of St. Peter and the other Apostles, John the Baptist, etc. Even the differences, which can be explained without doing violence to the texts, offer an advantage: they show that each Evangelist preserved his own independence as a writer and that there was no servility in the use they made of their written or oral sources. Their undeniable unity is a pledge of their truthfulness.

But a control of greater scope—a very strict control from the outside—has been applied to the Gospel narratives from all possible angles, without ever finding them at fault. In detail as well as in their *ensemble,* they harmonize with the very complicated historical period which they describe. Let us bear in mind that, in the first century of our era, archæological tastes were not much developed, in fact, they scarcely existed. At that time no one would have thought, as is now done with more or less success, of composing a historical novel about some personage of the past. A forger would soon go astray amid the political, social, and religious details of the Jewish world at that time: he would thus betray himself. The Evangelists, on the contrary, are always in agreement with the facts of contemporaneous history. The picture they draw of the surroundings and conditions in which Our Lord lived is one of utmost fidelity. In studying that milieu with the fixed purpose of exercising such control, one is impressed by the strict accuracy of the sacred writers. What they say of Jewish life and thought, of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, of

Caiphas and Herod Antipas, of publicans, of customs and usages, etc., always agrees with the reality. The local coloring appears faithful in the smallest details.[246]

Not only is the historical milieu described with most praiseworthy faithfulness, but also the geographical, archæological, religious, and moral environment. The geographical setting is so correct and so useful for a more complete understanding of Our Lord's life, that some have gone so far as to call it "a fifth Gospel." A rapid survey of Palestine is enough to enable us to recognize that, despite the changes brought about by so many long centuries, the outward characteristics of the country are quite those with which the Gospels acquaint us by the minute topographical details scattered through their pages. The apparently most trifling archæological data—such as the mention of certain Jewish, Greek, or Roman coins,[247] about which it was so easy to be mistaken—also prove, in their own way, the writers' truthfulness. Being so exact in these secondary points, the biographers of Christ would be even more so, if that were possible, in the major affairs that constitute the direct subject of their writings: thus we have their honesty as a guaranty of the reliability of the Gospels.

2. This probity appears on every page. On reading the Gospels, and still more when meditating on them, one is promptly convinced that the writers are sincere, disinterested, faultlessly impartial. They tell their story simply, objectively, in

[246] Special works have been composed by the aid of the Talmud and the rabbinical writings, most emphatically drawing attention to this fact. The earlier ones as well as the latest are very useful for the study of the Gospels from this angle. In the former class are the works of Lightfoot and Schoettgen. Among the more recent are T. Robinson, *The Evangelists and the Mishnah, Illustrations of the Four Gospels Drawn from Jewish Tradition,* 1859; A Wünsche, *Neue Beiträge zur Erläuterung der Evangelien aus Talmud und Midrash,* 1878; R. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash,* 1904.

[247] The talent, Matt. 18:24; 25:15, etc.; the *mina,* Luke 19:13–27; the *denarius,* Matt. 18:28; Mark 6:37; Luke 7:41, etc.; the *drachma,* Luke 15:8 f.; the *didrachma,* Matt. 17:23; the *stater,* Matt. 17:26; the *as,* Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6; the *quadrans,* Matt. 5:26; the *lepton,* Mark 12:42; Luke 12:59, etc.

a wholly impersonal manner, never putting themselves forward, even though they themselves (St. Matthew and St. John) or their teachers (St. Peter for St. Mark, St. Paul for St. Luke), early or late, had taken a considerable part in the Gospel history and the foundation of the Church. Nor is it merely their individuality that they leave completely in the background, but even their innermost feelings. Of course, they have no thought of concealing their belief in Christ, in His mission, His miracles, and His divinity; but nowhere does this turn them into panegyrists. It would seem that they had put a damper on their feelings of tenderness to keep them from bursting forth. The events that most glorify their divine Hero as well as the saddest, most humiliating and tragic, are set forth with a calmness, we might even say, with an apparent lack of feeling, that is astonishing. Does not St. Luke employ the simplest possible language in recounting the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word,[248] without the slightest allusion to its sublimity? "The angel departed from her": this is all he says at the close of his account, which like the event itself has with good reason been called virginal. When the first biographers of Christ describe the cruel scenes of His Passion or the unspeakable insults inflicted on Him, a superficial reader might be tempted to regard the writers as indifferent and to suppose they were unmoved by Judas' infamous betrayal or the horrors of the scourging or the unutterable agony of the Crucifixion. In all this the Evangelists appear as true models of literary integrity. On the other hand, with what startling frankness they confess their own weaknesses or those of their dearest friends! They point out, for instance, the lack of understanding shown by the Apostles with regard to certain words or deeds of the Divine Master,[249] their feelings of ambition or jealousy,[250] their want

[248] Luke 1:26–38.
[249] Cfr. Matt. 15:16; Mark 4:13; 6:52; 8:14–21; John 6:61.
[250] Mark 9:32 f.; Luke 9:46; 22:24, etc.

of faith and courage,[251] the stern rebukes that Christ addressed to them on various occasions,[252] etc.

After considering these details, which might be multiplied at great length, must we not conclude that "the character of the Gospel is its own testimonial," as someone forcibly remarks? Does it not testify in its own behalf with irresistible force? Origen's saying, based on a text of the Psalms,[253] is still more striking: "The Gospel accounts are oracles of the Lord Himself, oracles most pure, like silver that has been seven times refined by fire." [254]

VI. The Adequacy of the Gospels

Now that we know the Gospels and their worth as historical documents, we must inquire whether the information they supply about Our Lord is abundant and complete enough to permit the writing of His Life.

To answer this question suitably, a distinction must be made. To compose a biography of the Savior, as the word is understood to-day, would evidently be impossible, for it is certain that the material supplied by the Gospels and other Christian sources mentioned above, would be insufficient. In fact, the Evangelists, in relating the life of Christ, had no intention of being complete, after the manner of chronicles. How many gaps, therefore, are to be noted in their accounts, even if we unite them all together so as to form one narrative. What do we know of the first thirty years of Our Lord's life? St. Matthew and St. Luke are the only ones to speak of His birth and to mention a few scant incidents of His infancy and boyhood. What do we know of the forty days that elapsed

[251] Matt. 26:40; 28:17; Mark 16:13; Luke 8:25; 24:11, etc.
[252] Matt. 16:23; Mark 16:13 f., etc.
[253] Ps. 17:31.
[254] See Appendix VI, *infra*.

between His Resurrection and His Ascension? What gaps also in the course of His public life, despite the fact that it constitutes the subject-matter of the Gospel history! Of this period which, according to the most likely calculations, lasted a little more than three years, we possess only extracts. It is true that the Evangelists record a great variety and number of incidents; but, as St. John says in eloquent hyperbole,[255] they were selected from other episodes much more numerous.

The Evangelists had a much more exalted mission than that of being biographers of Christ. Besides the primitive doctrinal preaching, which they so faithfully reproduce, they chiefly aim to set forth what, from the life of the Redeemer, was most apt to arouse faith in Him and thereby lead souls to salvation.

The real question, therefore, is not: Do the Gospels give us as many details about Christ as our pious curiosity might desire? but: Do the Evangelists give us all the information we need in order to know Our Lord well and to adhere to Him as to the promised Messias, the Son of God made man? The sacred writers are not concerned with following their Hero day by day. But let us recognize that, thanks to them, we possess amply sufficient details for an affirmative answer to the second of these questions. And we can be certain that, even if our knowledge of Christ's earthly life were much more extensive, our picture of Him would not be different from that which has been so faithfully transmitted to us. In fact, the portrait which the Evangelists draw of the Savior "is such a true likeness that the ablest historian, fortified with all the methods and means of his art, would

[255] John 21:25. Taking a practical view of the question, Burkitt (*The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, pp. 20 f.) says that to pronounce, "with proper gravity and solemnity," all the Savior's words quoted in the Gospels, would take no more than six hours. Calculating one by one, so far as possible, the sayings and sermons of the days of His public life, he finds barely forty. These figures show in a striking manner what gaps there are in the history of Christ.

not do better for the most beloved countenance." [256] Is not this far preferable to the most complete and fully drawn-out biography? All the other deeds and words of the Savior, the remembrance of which was gradually lost, would nowise modify the impression of Him that we have received through the accounts of the four Gospels—so admirable and truly providential was the choice of deeds and discourses.

Therefore, despite the protests of some critics, it is plain that one may compose a Life of Christ, in the broad sense that we have just explained above. The facts are the best proof of this. Who does not know of the remarkable works that have appeared these last forty years, not only from Catholic and orthodox Protestant pens, but also from the right wing of the liberal school, even from the strictly negative school? French Catholics have a right to be proud of the books of this kind published by Abbé Fouard, Bishop Le Camus, and Father Didon, all of them continuing to enjoy a well-deserved success. The Protestants of France boast of the interesting volume which M. de Pressensé has written in refutation of Ernest Renan. In England there have appeared in rapid succession similar works by Farrar, Geikie, and Edersheim; in Germany, those of Bernhard Weiss and W. Beyschlag. From the extreme left wing of "criticism," we have the learned books—however pernicious—of Theodore Keim and Albert Réville, not to mention other, less pretentious works published by numerous writers of all parties.

Let it be understood, then, that we are not to ask of the Gospels what it is not their aim to furnish. But, to the best of our ability, let us make use of their beautiful accounts, and we shall be sufficiently acquainted with Christ, whether in His

[256] It is Jülicher, one of the most notorious of the Liberal theologians, who makes this avowal in his *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 1st ed., p. 232. True, a few pages later (p. 237), he asserts that the material in the Synoptics is not sufficient "even to sketch the life of Christ in its principal outlines." See also K. Furrer, *Vorträge über das Leben Jesu,* pp. 16 f., 19.

outer life or those inner feelings and dispositions which were, so to speak, His perpetual motives. A competent critic has well said: "On the subject of Jesus, we are as reliably and abundantly informed as we are about any other great figure of antiquity." [257]

[257] W. Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., I, xxiii; cfr. A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

The Earthly Fatherland of Christ [258]

From the documents giving us information about the life of Our Lord, we pass to the consideration of the milieu in which He lived—first of all His earthly fatherland. We will take up in order the physical aspect of the country, its flora and fauna, and lastly its political divisions and chief cities at the time of Christ. This subject offers a special attraction. What a delight there is for the heart of a Christian in becoming acquainted, at least in its broad outlines, with the countryside which the eyes of the God-Man once viewed, the valleys and mountains trod by His sacred feet! Besides being a pleasing study, it will be useful, since Christ's gentle, divine features will appear to us more living when contemplated in their providential setting.

Nature and its ceaseless evolutions, especially man with his wars and his havoc, have wrought certain outward changes in the earthly fatherland of Christ. But in essentials it has not changed. For eighteen centuries Palestine has kept the same general aspect, the same climate, the same flora and fauna, the same valleys and mountains, the same rivers and springs, the same roads and paths. Though many towns and villages have disappeared or are represented only by ruins, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Sichar, the Mount of Olives, Bethania, the Jordan, the desert of Juda, Jacob's Well, and Mount Gerizim are still there, eloquent witnesses of Our Lord's life and of the truthfulness of the Evangelists.

[258] Among other works, see: V. Guérin, *Description de la Palestine,* 8 vols., 1868–1889; Tristram, *The Land of Israel,* 1865 (several editions), and *The Land*

I. Physical Aspects of Palestine [259]

1. Several facts will occasion surprise. First of all there is the name of the country, which is nothing else but that of the Philistines, those bitter and fearful enemies of Israel. By a curious anomaly, of which history furnishes more than one example, this name, originally belonging only to the southwest corner of the region, finally came to designate its whole extent.[260]

A more arresting phenomenon consists in the smallness of this justly renowned land. The Old Testament calls it the Lord's "footstool." [261] We may well say this region was Christ's footstool, since it was there the Word Incarnate deigned to pass nearly His whole human existence. Thus Palestine, after being the center and the site of the Jewish revelation, has had the thousand times more enviable glory of becoming the center and site of the Christian revelation.

But what a small country, if we examine it from the purely natural point of view! Cicero has nothing but contempt for it, saying: "The God of the Jews must be a little God, since He has given His people such a little country." [262] Although the

of Moab, 1874; A. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine,* 2d ed., 1868; Neubauer, *La Géographie du Talmud,* 1868; Chauvet and Isambert, *Syrie, Palestine,* 1892; G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land,* 1894; Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien,* 7th ed., 1910; F. Buhl, *Geographie des alten Palästina,* 1896 (contains numerous biblographical references); Guthe, *Palästina* (in the series *Land und Leute*), 1906; *La Palestine, Guide Historique et Pratique,* by professors of Notre-Dame de France à Jérusalem, 2d ed., 1912; W. Sanday, *Sacred Sites of the Gospels,* 1903.

[259] To follow this description, see A. Legendre, *Carte de la Palestine Ancienne et Moderne,* 1900; Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible,* 1890, plates 10–16, 18.

[260] Thanks especially to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Jewish historian Josephus, and the Roman government.

[261] Lamentations 2: 1.

[262] These words are quoted by Raumer, *Palästina,* 4th ed., p. 25, who cites as his references *Pro Flacco,* chap. 28, and *De Provinciis Consularibus,* V, 5, 10. But in these two passages Cicero merely speaks of Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish state, as being only a simple *fanum, i. e.,* temple or consecrated place.

genuineness of this text is questioned, yet it is certain that the land of the Jews, of Christ, is but a very small country. The prophet Isaias seems to allude to this fact when, contemplating the Messianic future, he quotes the words which the Lord addressed to desolate Sion: "The children of thy barrenness shall still say in thy ears: The place is too strait for me, make me room to dwell in." [263] The narrowness of Palestine becomes still more striking when we think of the vast extent of the empires that surrounded it at different periods of history: Syria to the north, Chaldea, Assyria, and Persia to the east, Egypt to the south.

Its natural boundaries are sharply accentuated in three directions. To the south Arabia Petraea, to the west the Mediterranean Sea, to the east the vast Syro-Arabian desert, sharply separate it from every other country. But to the north it has no such precise line of demarcation. We may say that its territory ends at the deep ravine which serves as a bed for the Leontes River, to-day the Litany, in the lower part of its course.[264] "From Dan to Bersabee" was a proverbial expression in the time of the Prophets and kings of Israel, to indicate its length.[265] This dimension, taking the Nahr-el-Kasimiya as a starting point, is 142 miles, according to the calculations of English engineers. The width, for that part of Palestine west of the Jordan, varies considerably, as may be observed by a glance at the map. While at the latitude of Gaza it is 58 miles, and of Jaffa 55 miles, it is only 23 miles at the extreme north. It is not surprising, therefore, that from certain hills or mountains situated at the center of this band of territory—for instance, from the top of the Neby Samwil

[263] Is. 49:20.

[264] At that time the river was called *Nahr el Kasimiya.*

[265] Cfr. Judges 20:1; 1 Kings 3:20; 2 Kings 3:10; 3 Kings 4:25; 1 Par. 4:28, etc. Dan, which was also called Lais, stood on the site of Tell el Kadi, at the southern foot of Mount Hermon, a short distance west of Banias. Bersabee, to-day Bir-es-Sebah, is situated about 25 miles southwest of Hebron.

(2900 feet), north of Jerusalem, and from the summit of Gerizim (2850 feet), near Nablus—you may clearly see on one side the Mediterranean, on the other the mountains of Moab, marking the horizon beyond the Jordan.

The total area of Palestine, including the districts beyond the Jordan, scarcely exceeds 10,000 square miles. The figure for the present population is difficult to calculate.[266] At the time of Our Lord, according to the best estimates, the country was ten times more populous than to-day.

If Palestine is only a little country when viewed as the portion and abode of God's people, the part that formed the direct field of action for our Savior's history shrinks to still smaller proportions. In short, if we leave out of account the little towns connected with the Savior's birth and hidden life—Bethlehem and Nazareth—and if we omit the journeys that Christ made to the northwest towards Tyre and Sidon, and to the north to Caesarea Philippi, His ministry becomes centered at two distinct points, not far distant from each other: in the north, Capharnaum and its environs; in the south, Jerusalem.

2. Glancing at a map of that part of Asia which is washed by the Mediterranean, we note, between the Bay of Issus, located to the southeast of the Asia Minor peninsula, and the gulf which spreads out at the north of the Sinai peninsula, at the entrance into Egypt, a long range of mountains, connecting Mount Amanus and Arabia Petraea. This range, six or seven times longer than it is wide, forms a sort of isthmus between the sea and the Syro-Arabian desert.

Let us place ourselves almost at the center of this isthmus, in the extensive plain of Celosyria. There is the source of four celebrated rivers, which flow away from one another in

[266] Among others, Max Löhr, *Volksleben im Lande der Bibel*, 1907, p. 2. As a consequence of recent events, and thanks to the transfer of Palestine to England and to the Jews, the population will undoubtedly increase rapidly.

four different directions. The Orontes goes straight north and empties into the Mediterranean after passing through Antioch; the Barada turns east, enters Damascus and loses itself in the heart of the desert; the Leontes, mentioned above, first rushes south as a furious torrent, then turns sharply west to empty into the Mediterranean a little above Tyre; lastly the Jordan, holding steadily to the south, ends in the Dead Sea, after crossing the entire length of Palestine. The Orontes was the river of northern Syria; the Barada, of Damascene Syria; the Leontes, of Phœnicia; the Jordan has remained *par excellence* the river of the Holy Land, to which it has helped to give a particular stamp.

The Holy Land forms part of this isthmus connecting the Taurus range with the massive body of Sinai. It is, therefore, taken as a whole, not only a mountainous country, but a veritable block of mountains. To the south of Celosyria, or Lower Syria,[267] the Lebanon—the "Mont Blanc" of the Hebrews—and the Anti-Lebanon gradually diminish in height as they approach Palestine, nearly the whole territory of which they penetrate by their lesser branches. However, at the latitude of Damascus, the Anti-Lebanon suddenly rises again to form Mount Hermon, which is slightly less lofty and scarcely less majestic than Lebanon.[268] Its summit, visible from afar, is, like that of Lebanon, snow-capped almost all the year round.

To the west of the Jordan, in that portion of Palestine more intimately connected with the life of Christ, the mountainous mass generally assumes a special form. It has been compared to a gigantic myriapod, whose back would represent

[267] So named because it is dominated on the west by the mass of Lebanon, on the east by that of Anti-Lebanon. Its highest point, near Baalbek, attains an altitude of 3800 feet. Its present name is El Bekaa. It is 70 miles long.

[268] Its highest point is 9380 feet above sea level. The loftiest summit of Lebanon has an altitude of 10,535 feet.

the central ridge, while its legs, extending from either side, would represent, with the spaces between them, the lateral ridges and valleys which to the west, by a descending slope, disappear at the shore of the Mediterranean, while to the east they descend more abruptly to the Jordan basin.[269] The comparison is well founded, for, whether on the side of the sea or on that of the Jordan, the ground rises gradually so as to attain a mean altitude of 1600 or 2000 feet in the northern and of 2600 feet in the southern portion. From all sides, from Arabia Petraea on the south, from the Mediterranean on the west, from the Jordan on the east, from the plain of Esdraelon on the north, you must climb to reach the central plateau, on which stood the cities of Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Bethel, Samaria, and others.

In this same western portion may be distinguished, amid the mountains forming the frame-work of the country, three particular massifs, composed mostly of cretaceous limestone. The northern one, the massif of Galilee, is the most marked; it extends from the Kasimiya River to the plain of Esdraelon. The massif of Samaria—"Mount Ephraim," as the Hebrews called it[270]—and the massif of Judea, or the "mountain of Juda,"[271] are scarcely separated from each other except by the imaginary line which serves as a boundary between the two provinces. The latter, however, is remarkable for the more compact character of its mountains, whereas the former rather frequently opens out to form valleys watered by little streams. As for the mountains of Galilee, they are much more detached and, if they were more wooded and more thickly populated, their aspect would recall that of some sections of France.

269 The skeleton of a whale has also been used as a term of comparison. The two figures express the same idea.

270 Josue 17:15; Judges 2:9; 1 Kings 9:3; 1 Par. 6:67; Jer. 4:15, etc.

271 Josue 11:21; 2 Par. 27:4.

On the other side of the Jordan, the mountains, often rising steeply from Lake Tiberias and from the deeply embanked valley of the river, join their summits and form a vast plateau with a mean elevation of 2600 feet, dotted with isolated peaks. Immense fields of volcanic sand and extensive stone-covered stretches alternate with fields of grain and rich pastures.

The mountains which hold such a notable place in the physical configuration of Palestine, played a considerable part in the life of Christ. His eyes often rested on them; His sacred feet climbed them repeatedly. The Evangelists delight in showing Him to us, now on the "high mountain" of the Temptation,[272] now on one that formed, as it were, a pedestal for the pulpit from which He delivered His greatest sermon,[273] now on that of His solitary, inmost prayer,[274] now on the Mount of the Transfiguration,[275] now on that mountain of Galilee where He appeared to a large number of disciples between His Resurrection and Ascension,[276] now on the Mount of Olives, from which He majestically rose out of sight, ascending into heaven.[277]

Let us descend from the central ridge that dominates the whole country west of the Jordan and marks the line of the watershed. Along the Mediterranean coast we find what is called the maritime plain. The shore, with its margin of whitish or reddish sand contrasting with the deep blue of the water, is in general rather monotonous. It forms an almost straight line, running north and south, but turning somewhat to the east at its upper part. As far as the promontory of Carmel, which is about half-way along this line, one meets no

[272] Matt. 4:8; Luke 4:5.
[273] Matt. 5:1; 8:1.
[274] Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46.
[275] Matt. 17:1, 9, etc.
[276] Matt. 28:16.
[277] Luke 24:50.

bay, no worth-while harbor for ships. In the southern portion, the principal port, Jaffa, is rendered well nigh inaccessible by the rocks which obstruct most of the entrance.[278] To the north of Carmel stretches the graceful Bay of Acre; then, proceeding still farther north, on the Phœnician coast, one observes the presence of more hospitable harbors which, thousands of years ago, inspired the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, and the neighborhood with those maritime and commercial tastes that brought them so much wealth and glory. In its southern part this plain along the Mediterranean attains its greatest dimensions. On the ancient territory of the Philistines, between Gaza and Jaffa, it used to go by the name of Shephelah, *i. e.,* "low" country, in contrast with the mountains of Judea, which dominate it from the east. Between Jaffa and Caesarea it is called the plain of Sharon. It steadily diminishes in breadth as it goes north. Opposite to and south of Jaffa, it is about twelve miles wide; near Caesarea it is only eight. It is not a completely united plain. On the eastern side it rises little by little, attaining an altitude of about two hundred feet when it reaches the foot of the mountains. And it is dotted with knolls.

Still further north the maritime plain grows notably narrower. After passing the promontory of Carmel, which reaches to the water's edge, it broadens out again between Haifa and Acre, at the place where the great Esdraelon valley opens, coming from the east. Near the Ladder of Tyre it is entirely closed by a rocky promontory, which can be passed only by means of steps crudely hewn in the rock. That is where in olden times Phœnicia began. The plain is resumed north of Tyre, keeping pretty much the same character as at the southern end, that is, it is composed of a sandy margin

[278] On the inhospitable nature of a great part of the coast of Palestine, see Schwalm, *La Vie Privée du Peuple Juif à l'Époque de Jésus-Christ,* pp. 93 f., 98–100, 394.

and a stretch suitable for cultivation, which gently rises to the foot of the mountains.

We have explored three of the longitudinal zones into which Palestine is divided: the mountain region of the east, that of the west, and the plain along the seacoast. The fourth consists of the Jordan valley which, crossing the country from north to south, is, in a way, its artery. The river flows parallel to the two mountain chains which overhang it on the right and left. It is unique, for it presents this extraordinary phenomenon that its chief source, at the foot of Mount Hermon, is 1846 feet above sea level, and where it empties into the Dead Sea it is 1286 feet below sea level. This makes a difference of more than 3100 feet between its source and its mouth while it flows the relatively short distance of 93 miles as measured in a straight line. It is true that it traverses this interval with endless meanderings, especially after leaving Lake Tiberias. To go from this lake to the Dead Sea, although in a straight line the distance is only 62 miles, the Jordan, with all its capricious detours, takes more than 180 miles. It is, therefore, easy to imagine how rapidly it must rush along the strange fissure that constitutes its bed. Its name[279] designates it as "the descending one."

In its course it forms three lakes of different sizes: at the north, the pond which used to be called Merom and which the Arabs now call Huleh; farther down, the famous Lake Tiberias or Sea of Galilee, a fine body of water which we shall have to describe later on; at the extreme south, the Dead Sea, into which the river empties. On its left bank it receives two principal tributaries: the Hieromax or Yarmuk, as it leaves the large Galilean lake, and the Jabbok or Nahr-ez-Zerka. After the winter rains and in the spring, when the snow on Mount Hermon begins to melt, this river habitually overflows, but without causing much damage, because of the form its bed

[279] From the root *yarad*, to descend.

assumes in its more southerly portion. It is a real valley, eight to twelve miles wide, banked by terraces, one above the other, which the current has gradually formed by digging and carrying off the soil. The Arabs named it Ghor, "crevasse." At the bottom of this crevasse flows the river, whose bed, strictly so called, is hardly 65 feet wide.[280] On its two banks it is bordered by a very dense growth of tamarisks, poplars, and other trees. Ordinarily it is fordable at several points, two of which are opposite Jericho.

From these details it is evident how geographically important the Jordan River is for the Holy Land. Its big crevasse makes two clear-cut divisions, the one on the west side called Cisjordana,[281] the one on the east, Transjordana.[282] The fertile plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel, mentioned above, extends in the form of a triangle between the Carmel chain, the mountains of Samaria, and the southern hills of Galilee, and Mount Thabor, stretching across nearly the whole width of western Palestine, from east to west. But this line of separation cannot compare with that created by the Jordan valley: in fact, it unites rather than divides.

Such is the general physical configuration of the country of Christ. Its aspect is as varied as can be, especially if we consider its size. So diversified is it that no other region of the globe presents, thus grouped, a like number of striking phenomena and contrasts: the alpine zone of Lebanon and Hermon [283] bordering on the tropical region of the lower Jordan; the coastal area so close to that of the desert.

The ever reliable Gospel narratives frequently indicate this variety by accessory remarks. In fact, they mention the mountains, valleys, streams, plains, sea-coasts, desert, lakes,

[280] Cf. Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 f.
[281] That is, located "on this side" (*cis*) of the river, with reference to us.
[282] Located "across" (*trans*) the river.
[283] Such as found on two-thirds of Mont Blanc.

springs, and other elements of Palestinian nature, with which the Savior was in contact during His lifetime. The country has a very uneven surface, and the traveler journeying through it must repeatedly climb and descend again. Who will reckon the number of ascents and descents that must be made on foot, on horseback, or in a vehicle, in going from Hebron to Nazareth by the road connecting those two cities, then from Nazareth to Tiberias, from Tiberias to Safed, or from Tiberias to Banias and still further north? The Evangelists' expressive and always exact language perfectly agrees with this reality, so ceaselessly repeated. So they speak of "going up" to Jerusalem, "going down" from Cana to Capharnaum, "going down" from Jerusalem to Jericho, and so forth. As we have already had occasion to remark, they are never found in error, so well do they know the country they are describing.

The diversity of which we are speaking was quite providential. As the Bible and the Gospel were destined for the whole world, it was fitting that their geographical setting should be within reach of the inhabitants of all regions. "No land could have been found more capable of providing illustrations for a book which was to be read and understood by the men of North and South alike—which was to teach the lessons of truth equally to the dweller in the tropics and under the pole." [284]

Despite the multiplicity of sites, the landscapes of the Holy Land are not remarkable for natural beauty. The outer aspect of the country has no romance in it, nothing that appeals strongly to the eye. If it does impress the imagination, that is mostly through the stirring religious memories it evokes, more particularly those connected with the life of Christ. Monotony is its usual characteristic. The gray color of the

[284] Tristram, *The Land of Israel*, p. vii.

rocks that protrude from the soil nearly everywhere, the lack of trees, the absence of verdure during a considerable part of the year, the dry, stony beds of the winter torrents, the often identical shapes of the bare, rounded hilltops and mountain summits: all this, when contemplated for long hours, cannot have any great charm. Yet it is the country of Christ, and this thought, filling the mind and heart, colors many a spot with pink or blue or green or golden hues. Then, too, it may happen that a sudden change takes place in the view, a valley opens before you, a mountain detaches itself from its neighbors and takes on a more original shape, and you experience an agreeable surprise: for instance, coming from Nazareth by way of Cana, you perceive Tiberias and its wonderful lake in the depth of the charming basin that encloses them; at Nablus, at the foot of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal; on the summit of Mount Carmel, at Haifa, in the region of Mount Hermon, on the Mount of Olives, at Jericho. And it was a hundred times finer when Palestine was abundantly populated and intelligently cultivated.

Let us now leave this esthetic side of the Holy Land, a side to which the Evangelists nowhere allude. We may say, however, that the Savior's divinely delicate soul felt for the beauties of nature an attraction that remains visible in the accounts that relate His life.

We will close this picture by recalling the central position that Palestine occupied in the ancient world. "This is Jerusalem, I have set her in the midst of the nations, and the countries round about her," said the Lord God by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel.[285] Such a situation had a special importance since, from this blessed and privileged land, from this center of the true religion, the glad tidings of the Gospel were launched forth in all directions.

[285] Ezech. 5: 5.

II. Climatic Conditions of Palestine: Products of the Soil; Fauna

After the preceding description, one should expect to find in the country of Christ rather notable variations of climate and temperature according to differences of location, whether it be on the Mediterranean shore, the central ridge and eastern plateau, the Jordan valley, or the alpine heights. While the climate of the Ghor is tropical at times, that of the central plateau is usually temperate; that of the coastal plain is still milder. At the summit of Mount Hermon you have a northern climate.

Taken as a whole, the climatic conditions of the Holy Land are of such a nature that to-day, as from time immemorial, the inhabitants spend a considerable part of their life in the open air except, of course, on cold or rainy days. In the country of Christ there are, strictly speaking, only two seasons, which are very unlike each other: the rainy and the dry season. That is why in the seventy-third Psalm[286] the inspired poet, addressing God the Creator, says: "Thou hast made all the borders of the earth: the summer and the spring were formed by Thee."[287]

In a general way the spring and autumn equinoxes form the dividing points for the two seasons. The dry period ordinarily extends from April to October; the rainy season, from November to March. The especially rainy months are January and February. As in the days of the prophet Elias,[288] the most abundant rains are almost invariably produced by west winds. On the other hand, the unbearable heat that comes on certain days is caused by the *Khamsin* or south wind. Hence it was that Christ said to the crowds, as St. Luke reports: "When

[286] The seventy-fourth in the Vulgate.

[287] In Gen. 8:22 there is likewise merely question of winter and summer, the season of cold and that of heat.

[288] Cfr. 3 Kings 18:42–45.

you see a cloud rising from the west, presently you say: A shower is coming: and so it happeneth. And when you see the south wind blow, you say: There will be heat: and it cometh to pass."[289] The south and east winds pass over the desert before reaching Palestine; that is why they are hot and dry. Those from the west have passed over the Mediterranean and are therefore laden with moisture.[290]

Severe winter cold is almost unknown in the Holy Land. While it is true that snow and frost make their appearance nearly every year, they generally disappear within a few hours. The heat of June, July, and August is made more tolerable by the evening breeze and the morning dew. Both of them are mentioned in the Canticle of Canticles.[291] The mean temperature of the country is 52°, 46°, 48° in December, January, and February respectively; 54° and 61° in March and April; from 70° to 77° progressively from May to August; from 77° to 61° progressively from August to November.[292] The climate is generally healthful, except in certain swampy regions and, during the periods of extreme heat, in the torrid Jordan valley.

Naturally the vegetation varies a great deal in the different districts of Palestine. It must have been wonderful in ancient times when the land of Canaan was described as a country "that floweth with milk and honey." But this proverbial expression[293] would be much less correct to-day than in the time of Moses, the Judges of Israel, or Christ, for the conditions of soil fertility have in great measure disappeared. Without having ever been a heavily wooded country in the periods cor-

[289] Luke 12:54.

[290] Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–10, 169–172.

[291] Cant. 2:17 and 5:2; see also Judges 6:38; Ps. 132:3.

[292] *La Palestine, Guide Historique et Pratique,* by professors of Notre-Dame de France à Jérusalem, 2d ed., p. 9.

[293] It occurs at least twenty times in Holy Scripture; see especially Ex. 3:8, 17; Num. 13:28; Deut. 6:3; Josue 5:6; Jer. 11:5; Ezech. 20:6.

responding to the history of the Hebrews and that of the Savior, the Holy Land did at one time possess a certain number of forests,[294] thanks to which the humidity of the soil was maintained and the mountain regions were fertilized. With certain exceptions, to be seen especially at Carmel, in Galaad, and in a few places of Galilee, unfortunately these forests have long since been destroyed. Moreover, the maintenance of the artificial terraces that in many places used to retain the fertile soil, has been neglected, and the violent winter rains have washed the soil away, exposing the bare rock in many a locality where it used to be possible to cultivate grape-vines and grain.[295] The Turkish régime, with its depredations and burdensome taxes, discouraged agricultural works and also contributed a large share to diminishing the productivity of the land. Then, too, the many springs which were wont to bring freshness and fertility, have gradually dried up. Arab heedlessness has done the rest.

Nevertheless Palestine still counts a large number of districts where agricultural products and luxuriant vegetation recall the days of old. Even yet the southern part of the coastal plain, between Gaza and Jaffa, is an immense field of grain in the springtime. The plain of Sharon, once noted for its pastures,[296] the valley of Sichem, the Basan plateau, the plain of Esdraelon, the environs of Banias at the foot of Mount Hermon, the gardens about Jericho, and many a district of Galilee produce a variety of agricultural products. Considered as a whole, the soil of Palestine is excellent for cultivation and, wherever it is worked by good methods, gives a prompt reward. Wheat fields alternate with fields of barley, lentils, sesame, beans, corn, flax, pumpkins, and cucumbers, and the usual yield is satisfactory. In modern Palestine there are, as

[294] The Old Testament books mention several of them; cfr. Josue 17:14–18; 1 Kings 22:5; 23:15; Ps. 131:6, etc.

[295] Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–22.

[296] Cfr. 1 Par. 27:29; Is. 65:10.

there formerly were, truck gardens which provide their owners with wholesome food, besides an appreciable income when their vegetables are taken to the markets of the neighboring towns and villages.[297]

At the beginning of spring the Holy Land presents a memorable sight. Wherever there is a bit of tillable land, it is covered with a thin grass and with aromatic plants that form part of the Mediterranean flora. Soon afterwards millions of flowers, usually of brilliant colors, spring up and give the country a new appearance in contrast with the monotonous grayish tone which we mentioned above. In the first days of April this fresh vegetation presents a wonderful spectacle. In addition to unfamiliar plants you see the daffodil, anemone, crocus, gladiolus, tulip, poppy, spearwort, bluebottle, the pretty little cockscomb, hyacinth, jonquil, carnation, iris, here and there some cistus, a little later the lily, whose beauty our Savior so highly praised.[298] But this delightful, living mosaic, has but an ephemeral existence. As soon as the sun becomes warmer, verdure and flowers dry up until the next spring and, as in the past, serve only as fuel for frugal ovens and for baking bread.[299]

The trees alone remain, with their foliage often persistent. Those habitually met with in Palestine are, among the species bearing edible fruit,[300] the olive and the fig, which are found everywhere and are still, along with the grape, one of the chief resources of the country. They are repeatedly mentioned in the Gospels. An Arab proverb, comparing these three, says that "the grape-vine is a lady," a distinguished person exacting a

[297] On the highways and side-roads leading to Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nablus, and in all similar agglomerations, in the morning you will meet veritable processions of men and women carrying in their arms or on their heads a plentiful supply of vegetables.

[298] Matt. 6:28 f.

[299] Ps. 89:6; Is. 11:6–8; Matt. 6:30; James 1:10 f., etc.

[300] See Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–15, 76–79.

great deal of attention, the fig-tree is a *fellah, i.e.,* a peasant of robust constitution, and the olive-tree a *Badawiya,* a Beduin, who can endure privation, and to whom no one pays any attention. In times past the date-palm raised its slender trunk and clustered foliage in nearly every part of the country. At the present time it is to be found only in certain privileged corners: at Gaza, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Jericho, Ramleh, and especially Haifa.[301] Among the other trees, we note the carob, producing the sweetish husks that the prodigal son would so gladly have eaten,[302] the mulberry, the pistachio, the Oriental sycamore, the arbutus, the turpentine, the walnut (in Galilee), the poplar, the tamarisk, several varieties of oak and coniferous trees.

In addition to useful or merely pleasing products of the soil, the Holy Land also brings forth harmful ones, among which the thorny plants hold a surprising place. They so abound that the Hebrew Bible uses as many as twenty-seven different expressions to designate them. Unless relentless war is waged on them, they quickly overrun the fields and stifle the good seed.[303]

The fauna of Palestine probably has not changed much since Our Lord's time. We are here concerned with it only in so far as it has some bearing on the Gospel history. Among domestic animals, cattle seem not to be very abundant in the country to-day. But on all sides you will see herds of sheep and goats. The sheep are generally white; most of the goats are black. The camel renders useful services to the inhabitants. It appears on all the roads, queer and ungainly, we might say deformed, but laden with wood, stones, and other heavy burdens, which it carries with a placidity more apparent than real. Sometimes it is harnessed—and such a team is cer-

[301] *Ibid.,* pp. 82–85.
[302] Luke 15:16.
[303] Matt. 13:7.

tainly bizarre—with an ass, which, if in Palestine it has not the elegance of its Egyptian brother, in the matter of looks surpasses the ass of France. It is the familiar riding-animal of the country. More than once you would be reminded of the Holy Family, upon seeing a group of this sort approaching along the road: a man of humble station, leaning on a staff and leading an ass on which is seated a young woman, holding an infant in her arms.

The Holy Land contains a rather large number of wild beasts.[304] The principal ones are the dog, the wolf, the jackal, the fox, the hyena, and the leopard, which roam over the desert places and whose baying and howling resounds during the night. The lion has long since disappeared from the land, but the Syrian brown bear still lives in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. As to the dogs, it is very rare in Palestine for them to live in the domesticated state; rather, they gather in "disgusting bands," which feed on the filth and refuse that is thrown in the roads.

The birds mentioned by the Evangelists, as generally by the sacred writers, are those most frequently to be seen in the land of Christ. There are sparrows of every kind, living in the fields or woods. There are pigeons and doves, roosters and hens, ravens that "sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn," [305] but are a plague for the farmer. There is also a whole army of birds of prey that gather, as is written in the Gospel,[306] wherever there is a carcass.

The Jews have always been and still are fond of fish. It is only the poorest of them who do not have fish at the principal meal on the Sabbath. In this respect the compatriots of our Lord may well consider themselves fortunate in Palestine, where the Jordan, and especially Lake Tiberias, contain all

[304] See Tristram, *Natural History of the Bible,* 8th ed., 1889.
[305] Luke 12:24.
[306] Matt. 24:28.

sorts of fish.[307] Reptiles, venomous and otherwise, are not rare in that warm country. Their favorite retreats are thorny thickets, clefts of the rocks, stone piles, and old walls.

Lastly, useful and injurious insects likewise have a place in Palestine. The bee almost always lives in the wild state; but the peasants are clever in appropriating its tart, perfumed honey. Locusts from time to time make dreadful incursions, destroying the entire verdure in a few hours. Scorpions, whose sting is sometimes fatal, are numerous. Mites also multiply rapidly in that warm country and, unless great care is taken, they soon ruin the finest cloth and the choicest furs, as Our Lord Himself said.[308] Then there are countless flies, alighting everywhere, arousing disgust, and spreading more than one serious disease, including ophthalmia.

The details we have pointed out will give the reader a sufficient idea of Palestine to enable him to accompany the Divine Master on His missionary journey. We will add to this description at other points in the course of our work, as occasion requires.

III. The Four Provinces and the Principal Cities of Palestine in the Time of Christ

At the period we are describing, the division of the Holy Land among the twelve tribes had long since given way to another administrative partition. The country was divided into four provinces, one of them, Peraea, beyond the Jordan, the other three on this side. These latter were: Judea at the south, Samaria in the middle, and Galilee in the north. The Gospels show us Our Lord as passing through all four regions. Yet He had but rare and transient relations with

[307] Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–154; Lortet, *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui*, 1889, pp. 505–510; Tristram, *op. cit.*, pp. 282–294.

[308] Matt. 6: 19 f.

Samaria and Peraea, where He made only brief sojourns. It is mostly in Judea and Galilee, especially the latter, that we see Him exercising His public ministry and winning the greater number and most devoted of His followers.

1. Of these four provinces, Judea at the time unquestionably played the most important part, since, for the Jews, it was the religious and political and to a certain extent also the intellectual center of Palestine. It was there that, in the course of numerous centuries, had taken place the most significant events in Israel's history. There it was that Jerusalem was located, with its glorious Temple, the Sanhedrin, the head of the great rabbinical schools, and the most influential members of the priestly race and of the sect of the Pharisees. Judea was *par excellence,* the rabbis liked to say, the land of the *Chekinah, i. e.,* of the divine presence. The Roman geographer Strabo certainly was right in asserting[309] that there was no one in the world who would think of making war just to seize that territory, whose material wealth was so insignificant. But the inhabitants of Judea were proud, as they had a right to be, of treasures that were precious otherwise than as purely earthly goods. This is the thought of the Talmud when it says: "Let him who would acquire knowledge fly to the south [of Palestine], let him who would grow rich fly to the north [to Galilee]."[310] In fact, the inhabitants of Judea were much better versed in religious knowledge than were other Jews, nor did they fail to pride themselves on the fact.

In the time of Christ the territory of this province almost corresponded to that of the Kingdom of Juda before the exile. It was bounded on the south by the desert of Arabia Petraea; on the west by the Mediterranean Sea; on the east by the Jordan and the Dead Sea; on the north by Samaria. The Talmud divides it into three districts: the mountains—the "royal

[309] *Geography,* XVI, 2.
[310] Babylon Talmud, Baba Bathra, 1, b.

mountain," as its magniloquent language expresses it—the (coastal) plain, and the valley (of the Jordan). This division is quite easy to understand, following the description we have already given of the general physical contour of Palestine.

Anyone traveling north along the Mediterranean coast at the period with which this study deals would have met the following cities: Gaza and Ascalon, two famous cities of the Philistines, which for that reason were regarded with great aversion by the Jews; Jamnia, at an earlier date called Jebneel [311] or Jabnia,[312] which, after the destruction of Jerusalem, was for some time the seat of the Sanhedrin and the center of rabbinical teaching; farther north, at a considerable distance from the coast, Lydda, the ancient Lod, very active in commerce at that time, situated one day's journey from Jerusalem. Returning to the coast, our traveler would have found the port of Jaffa, where the prophet Jonas had landed;[313] then inland, to the northeast, Antipatris, which, according to the Talmudists, marked the northern limit of Judea in this section.

On the "royal mountain," to which the Talmud in its customary exaggeration assigns gigantic proportions, there were, says the Talmud, in the century just before the Christian era, "sixty myriads of cities," each of these containing "a number of persons equal to that of the Hebrews when they came out of Egypt." [314] To this curious assertion a certain rabbi ironically replies: "I have seen that region and I did not find enough room for sixty myriads of reeds." But the mountainous massif of Judea did contain some important places. Aside from Jerusalem, which merits a description by itself, there were, to the south, Hebron, which was already in existence in Abraham's time and still prides itself on possess-

[311] Josue 15: 11.
[312] 2 Par. 26: 6.
[313] Jonas 1: 3.
[314] Babylon Talmud, Gittin, 67, a.

ing his tomb;[315] farther north, Bethlehem, the city of David, and the place of the Messias's birth; still farther north, after passing beyond Jerusalem, Bethel, where Jacob had his prophetic vision, and Shilo, where the ark remained for many years. To the northeast of Jerusalem was the Nicopolis of the Romans, which the earliest tradition identifies with the Emmaus of the Gospel.[316] Lastly, in the Jordan valley, about fifteen miles from the capital, rose up the city of Jericho, miraculously conquered by Josue and justly regarded as the key to Palestine on its eastern side; the Machabees and the Romans had successively fortified it and Herod the Great delighted in beautifying it.

2. To the north of Judea, separated from it by an imaginary line which, in a general way, passed above Antipatris and Shilo, began the province of Samaria. Its massif extended to Djenin, at the southern corner of the valley of Esdraelon. We have already described its outer configuration. What most concerns us at this point is the special character of its people and the unfriendliness between them and the Jews. "There are two nations which my soul abhorreth," wrote the Son of Sirach, "and the third is no nation, which I hate: they that sit on Mount Seir, and the Philistines, and the foolish people that dwell in Sichem."[317] That aversion went back to the far-off time when Sargon, king of Assyria, after seizing the country and carrying off a great part of the inhabitants to the eastern provinces of his Empire, installed in their place, following the barbarous custom of the time, other prisoners of war, who had come, as we read in the Fourth Book of Kings, "from Babylon and from Cutha and from Avah and from Emath and from Sepharvaim."[318] This mixture, to

[315] This is why the Arabs have given Hebron the name El Khalil, "the friend," *i. e.*, the City of Abraham, who was *par excellence* the friend of God.

[316] Luke 24: 13.

[317] Ecclu. 50: 27 f.

[318] 4 Kings 17: 24.

which some apostate Jews were added later, gradually formed the Samaritan nation, whose religion, at first of a motley sort, afterwards took on a form approaching Judaism. Its followers even claimed it to be the worship of the true God. The construction on the summit of Mount Gerizim of a temple rivaling that of Jerusalem, still further stirred the hatred of the Jews. This bitterness went so far that the latter regarded the whole province of Samaria as defiled. Partly for this reason the Talmud does not mention it among the districts of Palestine and habitually designates its inhabitants by the opprobrious epithet of "Cutheans," people coming from the pagan city of Cutha. The Samaritans repaid the Jews with hatred for hatred, insult for insult, calling them idolaters and liars. They avenged themselves by still more vexatious tactics, molesting the Jews who crossed their territory on the way from Judea to Galilee and from Galilee to Judea. Their deeds of violence went so far as to become an occasion of death.[319] For this reason the Galileans, when going in groups on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the celebration of religious feasts, often preferred to take a longer route by passing through Peraea.

Numerous passages in the Gospel narrative reflect this mutual aversion of the two peoples. At one place we are told that the Savior's enemies did not hesitate to insult Him to His face by calling Him a Samaritan;[320] again we read that "the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans";[321] and again we see the Savior Himself obliged to keep away from Samaria and to make a detour on His way to Jerusalem.[322] Even to-day, after more than twenty centuries this hatred is not extinct. In the city of Nablus, where the last remnant of the Samaritan people resides,—a remnant reduced to about 250 souls,—the

[319] Josephus, *Ant.*, X, ix, 1.
[320] John 8:48.
[321] John 4:9.
[322] Luke 9:52 f.; see also Matt. 10:5.

following incident took place not long ago. "What! You, a Jew," said the Samaritan High Priest, Salameh Cohen, to the Israelite Dr. L. A. Frankl, "coming right among us Samaritans, who are despised by the Jews?" That same day, when Dr. Frankl told some Jewish ladies of Nablus about this visit, they drew back, uttering a cry of horror. One of them called out to him: "Take a bath for your purification, since you have gone near them." [323]

Bearing in mind that our point of view is that of the history of Christ, we have only a few Samaritan places to point out. The most important of them we have just mentioned, the ancient Sichem, then called *Neapolis* (from which we get *Nablus*). It was admirably situated in the narrow valley at the foot of Gerizim and Ebal and encompassed by them, in the very heart of the province. Not far from it might be seen the village of Sychar, now *El-Askar,* close to which there took place, at Jacob's well, one of the most touching incidents of the Gospel.[324] A little farther north, on a hilltop, encircled by other mountains, there rose up the ancient capital of the schismatic kingdom of the ten tribes. In Our Lord's time it was called Sebaste, formerly Samaria. Its splendid ruins have lately been unearthed. The city of Caesarea, built on the Mediterranean shore, on a line with Scythopolis, did not belong to Samaria, but to Judea. Josephus, the Talmud, and Roman writers are explicit on this point. Next to Jerusalem, it was the largest city of Palestine and was the ordinary residence of the procurator who administered Judea in the name of the Roman Emperor. This circumstance, as well as the fact that a large number of pagans formed part of its population, made it doubly hateful to the Jews. The rabbis speak of it as "the city of abomination and blasphemy." Herod the Great, to whom it belonged, enlarged and beautified it. It was he who

[323] L. A. Frankl, *Nach Jerusalem,* II, 417–421.
[324] Cfr. John 4: 5.

changed its name from Strato's Tower to Caesarea, in honor of Emperor Augustus.

3. So far as the life of Christ is concerned, Galilee is the most interesting and important province of Palestine.[325] The Hebrew word *Galil,* which the Old Testament used at a very early time,[326] means "circle," *i. e.,* district. In the first century of our era its limits were about as follows, according to Josephus:[327] it was bounded on the southwest by the Carmel range; to the southeast it reached close to Scythopolis; to the east, as far as the Jordan and Lake Tiberias; to the northwest, as far as the border of Tyre; to the northeast, to the foot of Mount Hermon. In short, it occupied the whole northern portion of Palestine, starting from Engannim (now *Djenin*), a city located at the southern point of the plain of Esdraelon. It is divided into two parts: to the north, Upper Galilee, including the higher mountain region; to the south, Lower Galilee, which was *par excellence* the Galilee of Jesus.

In our general description of Palestine we pointed out the special appearance which Galilee presents to the eye—more separated, more pleasing, more varied, and more uneven. Mount Hermon and its offshoots, Thabor, the hills of Gelboe, the plain of Esdraelon, Lake Tiberias and its neighborhood, the mountain of Safed, were not its least beauties. The fertility of its soil was remarkable. Josephus and the Talmud agree in boasting of it. Says the latter: "It is easier to raise a legion [*i. e.,* a forest] of olive-trees in Galilee than to raise a single baby in Judea."[328] The grape-vine, however, was not very abundant; but, on the other hand, olive oil flowed in streams. With the flax which they grew on a large scale, the Galileans

[325] See Guérin, *Description de la Palestine: La Galilée,* 1880; Selah Merril, *Galilee in the Time of Christ,* 1891; G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land,* chaps. XX and XXI.

[326] Josue 20:7; 4 Kings 15:29.

[327] *Bell. Iud.,* III, iii, 1.

[328] Babylon Talmud, Meguilloth, 6, a.

wove a linen which they made into clothes of fine quality.[329]

The country was thickly populated, says Josephus,[330] who, in the exaggerated style of the rabbis, asserts that the smallest city of Galilee contained 15,000 inhabitants. The same author, in many places in his works, gives us a sketch of the Galileans that seems to be correct, for it is confirmed by several writers of the same period. According to Josephus,[331] they were industrious, hardy, courageous, impulsive, easily irritated, quarrelsome. Being devoted patriots, they did not find it easy to brook the Roman yoke and were more ready to revolt than were the Jews in other parts of Palestine. This last trait is confirmed by two New Testament passages.[332] The Talmud [333] adds that the Galileans cherished honor more than money.

Although a great majority of its population was Jewish, yet because of its location—open on the northern side and close to Phoenicia and Syria—Galilee was necessarily in contact with the pagans of the neighborhood, a certain number of whom had settled on its land. For this reason, as early as the time of Isaias, it was spoken of as "Galilee of the Gentiles," [334] an expression quoted by St. Matthew.[335] Such contact was bound to exercise some influence on the spirit of the Galileans and to bring about a certain laxity, if not in their religious fervor, which left little to be desired, at least in their respect for the Pharisaic tradition, with regard to which they took many a liberty. In return for this, their brethren of Judea treated them with scorn. "Search the Scriptures," a Jerusalem doctor said to Nicodemus, "and see that out of Galilee a

[329] *Ibid.*, Babha Qamma, fol. 11, 2.
[330] *Bell. Iud.*, III, iii, 2.
[331] *Ant.*, XIII, i, 6; *Bell. Iud.*, III, iii, 1; *Vita*, 17.
[332] Luke 13:2; Acts 5:37.
[333] Jerusalem Talmud, Kethubhoth, IV, 14.
[334] Is. 9:1.
[335] Matt. 4:15; cfr. Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, III, i, 2.

prophet riseth not." [336] Many a passage in the Talmud breathes contempt for the northern province. And the rabbis repeat that the Galileans showed no great zeal for acquiring a knowledge of the traditional practices and that their country had furnished Judaism with but few doctors of the Law.

A characteristic mark of the people of the northern province was their faulty pronunciation of the idiom then spoken in Palestine. This contributed not a little to make them ridiculous in the eyes of the fine talkers of Judea and Jerusalem, who did not spare them affronts and sarcasm. Idiotisms, grammatical carelessness, peculiar accent, indistinct pronunciation of several letters, notably the gutturals, all promptly betrayed them and sometimes occasioned comical blunders, of which the Talmud preserves various examples. One instance is related as follows: "One day a Galilean asked a Jew of the south: 'Who has an *amar?*' The latter replied: 'Stupid Galilean, what do you mean? Are you inquiring about a *hamâr* (an ass) to ride upon, or *hamar* (wine) to drink, or *amar* (wool) for a garment, or an *imar* (a lamb) to offer in sacrifice?' " [337] We can, then, readily understand how St. Peter was recognized as a Galilean by his speech in the courtyard of Caiphas' palace.[338]

Of the numerous cities that gave so much life to Galilee, we will enumerate only the most celebrated, especially those which have become particularly dear to the Christian heart because of their association with Our Lord's life. They were to be found mostly in Lower Galilee. The Incarnation of the Son of God and His hidden life have crowned with a unique glory the humble city of Nazareth, that "Flower" of Galilee,[339]

[336] John 7: 52.

[337] Erubhin, fol. 53, 1.

[338] Matt. 26: 73; cfr. Buxtorf, *Lexicon Chaldaicum et Talmudicum,* p. 435; Fürst, *Chaldäische Grammatik,* p. 15; E. Böhl, *Alttestamentliche Citate im Neuen Testament,* 1878, pp. 338–344.

[339] St. Jerome, *Epist.,* 45, *ad Marcellum.*

which we shall have occasion to describe later on. From the height of the hill that overlooks it, the eyes take in, to the northeast, the city of Sepphoris (now Seffuria) which, according to Josephus,[340] was the largest city of the whole province. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Sanhedrin resided there for some time before establishing itself at Tiberias.

This latter city had been built by Herod Antipas on the western shore of the lake, which often bears its name. He called the city Tiberias in honor of Emperor Tiberius. Not far to the south are hot springs—"boiling waters," says the Talmud—which are still frequented. The inhabitants of Tiberias naturally engaged in fishing and in transportation on the lake. The Gospel merely mentions this city incidentally.[341] On the same shore, farther north, had been built a few cities which occupy a considerable place in the public life of Christ. With these we must become better acquainted: Capharnaum, Bethsaida, Magdala, Corozain. All of them were flourishing.

In the plain of Esdraelon we must point out Naim, the "Graceful," according to the word's etymology, located to the south of Mount Thabor; Haifa, the Gath-hefer of the Old Testament, at the foot of Carmel; a little farther north, Acre, on the bay of the same name. In Upper Galilee was located, to the northwest of the lake, which it overlooked, Sapped, perched on a height from which a fine panorama may be had. This is the city which Christ is supposed to have designated when in the Sermon on the Mount[342] He speaks of the city which cannot be hid. In the opposite direction, ascending the Jordan to one of its chief sources, we come to the present site of Banias, the ancient Panias, which in Gospel times bore

[340] *Vita*, 45.
[341] John 6:1, 23; 21:1.
[342] Matt. 5:14.

the name Caesarea Philippi. With this place is connected one of the grandest episodes in the life of Christ.[343]

4. Peraea rises on the other side of the Jordan,[344] and so rapidly that its mountains, viewed at a distance,—for instance, from the height of the central ridge of Judea—seem more lofty than they actually are. From afar you would think them a gigantic and almost perpendicular wall of bluish tint. Nevertheless they are rather uneven and traversed in many places by rapid torrents. Climbing the western slope along the lateral valleys thus formed, you gradually reach a vast, rolling plateau, covered here by verdure and there by volcanic rocks. This plateau gently declines until it loses itself in the immense Arabian desert. The configuration is characteristic; no other part of Palestine resembles Peraea in this respect.

The boundaries of this province have often changed. At the beginning of the Israelite occupation, it corresponded to the whole territory assigned to the tribes of Ruben and Gad and the eastern half-tribe of Manasse, extending north as far as Mount Hermon. In the time of Christ, according to Josephus,[345] it occupied only the region comprised between the ancient kingdom of Moab on the south and the city of Pella on the north. The deep gorge dug by the Jordan between it and western Palestine made it a separate region, which maintained relations with the other Jewish provinces only with great difficulty. For this reason the Talmud has much less to say about it than about Judea and Galilee. Revealing the merely secondary interest which this province aroused, the Talmud quotes an ancient proverb: "Juda represents the wheat; Galilee, the straw; the country beyond the Jordan, the tare."

[343] Cfr. Matt. 16: 13–20.

[344] The Greek word from which its name comes (πέραν) has precisely the meaning of "beyond"; cfr. Josue 1: 12–15, etc.

[345] *Bell. Iud.*, II, iii, 3.

The people of Peraea, moreover, were a racial mixture. At the period of our narrative, although the greater part of the population seem to have been of Jewish birth or converts to Judaism, Moabite blood and Ammonite, Syrian, Arab, Greek, and Macedonian must have mingled in considerable proportions with Israelite blood during the two or three centuries before the Christian era.

While the Gospels do not mention any of the cities of Peraea by name, they speak of inhabitants "from beyond the Jordan" [346] among the crowds that gathered about the Savior from all districts of Palestine at the beginning of His public career. They also mention several brief sojourns which Our Lord made there. From other documents we learn that John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas in the Fortress of Machaerus,[347] erected to the east of the Dead Sea. Nearby was Calirrhoe, noted for its hot springs.

5. To the north of Peraea and as a sort of prolongation of it, were at that time several other districts, which merely appear in the history of Christ. It is proper for us to say a few words about them here. They are Decapolis, Ituraea, Trachonitis, and Abilene.

As its name indicates, Decapolis [348] was a federation made up at first of ten cities which, with the single exception of Scythopolis, were located on the left bank of the Jordan. Later on at least four other cities were admitted into the federated group. The territory thus established occupied the plateau which rose to the east of Lake Tiberias and the partly wooded mountainous region adjoining, reaching south as far as the present Ajlun. From this country crowds also went down to see and hear the Master,[349] who twice betook Himself thither:

[346] Matt. 4:25; Mark 3:7 f.
[347] Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 2.
[348] A Greek word, meaning "ten cities."
[349] Matt. 4:25.

the first time, when He cured the two possessed persons in the country of the Gerasens;[350] the other time at the close of the long journey which took Him from Galilee to the region of Tyre and Sidon in the west, then to Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon, and, finally, "through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis."[351]

The population of this district was more mixed than that of Galilee and Peraea; the pagans at that time were in the majority. Its principal city was Scythopolis, formerly called Bethshean;[352] it still bears this name under the form of *Beisan.* The name "City of the Scythians" came seemingly from the fact that a number of Scythians had settled there at the time of the terrible invasion under Josias (639–608 B. C.). East of the river, going north, were Pella, Garada, Hippos, Gamala, Gerasa—Graeco-Roman cities, whose ruins, sometimes truly imposing, attest a very advanced civilization.

If, from the plateau that dominates Lake Genesareth on the east, you continue farther in the same direction, you have before you Batanaea, whose territory used to include part of the ancient country of Basan, so frequently mentioned in various books of the Old Testament. To the northeast of this domain there stretched the country which at that time bore the characteristic name of Trachonitis.[353] At an earlier period violent volcanic eruptions "sent forth streams of lava, one upon the other, for a distance of about twenty-five miles and a width of nineteen miles." From a distance the country looks uniform; in fact, however, "it is cut at every step by more or less deep crisscrossing ravines, forming veritable labyrinths with huge caverns. It makes an excellent place of refuge; un-

[350] Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26. We shall later have to inquire into the correct reading of the Greek text with reference to this city.

[351] Mark 7:31.

[352] Cfr. Josue 17:11; Judges 1:27, etc.

[353] From the Greek word τραχών, "a wrinkled, rough place."

doubtedly the reason for its present name of *El Lejah,* Refuge." [354] The ancient geographer Strabo said that "mischievous" people, *i. e.,* wild plunderers, had settled there in his day, to the great detriment of the neighboring regions. Herod the Great, who received this wild country as a gift from Rome, with no small difficulty succeeded in routing these bands of brigands. After his death Trachonitis formed part of the appanage of his son, the tetrarch Philip.[355]

Ituraea had also belonged to King Herod and then passed under the rule of this same Philip.[356] It was bounded on the north by the Damascene country, on the south by Trachonitis. It was almost identical with the modern Djedur, a rolling plateau with conical hills, where you may see both lava fields and basaltic rocks. To-day its population is quite limited. Like Trachonitis, the Graeco-Roman districts—Gaulonitis, Auranitis, and Batanaea, situated farther south—also formed part of the tetrarchy of Philip.[357]

Abilene, governed at the time of Christ by the tetrarch Lysanias,[358] took its name from the city of Abila, its capital, situated on the Barada River, northwest of Damascus, in the very heart of the Anti-Lebanon, at the spot now occupied by the village of Suk. It is not possible to say exactly what were the boundaries of this district. It seems to have occupied the whole country located on the upper course of the Barada, on the eastern slope of the Anti-Lebanon, as far as the vicinity of

[354] Séjourné, in the *Revue Biblique,* 1898, pp. 283 f.

[355] Luke 3 : 1.

[356] Josephus, *Ant.,* X, 3; *Bell. Iud.,* II, vi, 3.

[357] Batanaea had the same geographical limits as the ancient country of Basan; Gaulanitis, those of Golan, to-day Jaulan; Auranitis, those of the Auran of Ezech. 47 : 16, 18, the present Hauran. This whole country has been explored in recent times. See especially E. G. Rey, *Voyage dans le Haourân,* 1860; Chauvet and Isambert, *Syrie, Palestine,* 1883, pp. 494–551; Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land,* 1894, pp. 538–540, 665–667.

[358] Luke 3 : 1.

Mount Hermon. It was well watered and had plenty of excellent pasturage.[359]

On both sides of the Jordan, modern Palestine, with a few exceptions, is unfortunately a land of ruins. These ruins are to be seen in all directions. The excavations undertaken for some years past in various localities have brought to light hidden things that are of keenest interest from the viewpoint of the Bible in general and of the Gospels in particular. They belong to every period of the country's history, which, in their own way, they sadly recall. Many of them take us back to the days of the Chanaanites and the ancient Hebrews, but most of them are Graeco-Roman or date from the time of the Saracens and Crusaders. They are of every shape and form—simple piles of stone and rubbish, tottering walls, fragments of towers, overturned and broken columns or columns still majestically upright, tiers of seats of theaters and amphitheaters, the still imposing remains of temples, churches, and palaces. Though now they speak of death, yet they eloquently show forth what were once the life, fertility, business activity, and wealth of Palestine.

The Evangelists mention only a limited number of cities and less important places, some of them now destroyed and others still existing, which were located on hilltops or in the valleys of Palestine. By no means do they mention by name all those which the Divine Master honored by His presence. More than once, even in reference to some glorious event, they merely say that it came to pass "in a certain place."[360] This sort of detail entered but indirectly into their plan. We have already noted their remarkable accuracy in this respect also.

The identification of the cities and villages which they mention is most often an easy matter. The hamlets whose loca-

[359] For the location of these provinces, see Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible*, plates VII, X, and XII.

[360] Matt. 14:13; Luke 4:42; 6:17; 9:10; 11:1; John 6:10, etc.

tion gives rise to some hesitation on the part of topographers and commentators are not numerous,[361] so faithfully has tradition handed down their names through the ages to our own time. Moreover, these very names by themselves form a tradition, nearly always satisfactory. Who would not easily recognize, under their half Arab dress, Bethlehem in the modern *Beth-Lahm,* Nazareth in *En-Nacira,* Naim in *Nain,* Cana in *Kefr Kenna,* Magdala in *El Meidel,* etc.? The greater number of these cities or hamlets have remained in the identical spots they occupied at the time of Christ and, by taking some little pains, we can with the help of archaeology and modern customs, partly reconstruct the life led at that time and thus revive the setting of the Gospel story. Their narrow, curiously winding and irregular streets, usually frightfully unclean (were they so in the first century?), changing at times into gloomy tunnels—as in Jerusalem and Nablus, the ancient Sichem—often full of intense activity (the odd rumbling of loaded camels and asses, of men and women dressed in party-colored garments, bazaars where each class of merchandise occupies its special corner), all contribute a picturesque aspect to the scene, which cannot be easily forgotten by one who has witnessed it.

6. If it is true that the Israelites at all times have cherished a fondness for Palestine, for them the most excellent country in the whole world, a place where it is good to live and good to die, what are we to say of the intensity of their love for Jerusalem, which they regard, even more than Christians do, as the "Holy City" *par excellence,*[362] as the center of theocracy and its public worship, even as the abode and throne of God? According to the rabbis, when "the Creator bestowed ten measures of beauty on the world, nine of them fell upon Jerusalem." So, too, when Jews speak of their ancient

[361] *V. g.,* Dalmanutha, Mark 8: 10, and Bethania beyond the Jordan, John 1 : 28.
[362] The Arabian name of Jerusalem is *El Qods,* The Holy.

capital, they are pleased to call it "Great Jerusalem," very much as we say of Rome that it is the "Eternal City." The Talmudists so highly esteem it as to consider it quite apart, as though it formed an entire province by itself and did not belong to any particular tribe, because it was the common possession of all Israel.[363] They say further that "whosoever did not see Jerusalem in its magnificence, has never seen a beautiful city." [364] They make claim that, compared to it, the famous Alexandria of Egypt was nothing but a "small town." Giving free rein to their imagination, they assign to it, at the time of Christ, 480 synagogues and 80 large schools. They add that it was cared for with such pains that its public squares were swept every day. The inhabitants were—we are still following the Talmudic writings—very polite, of most distinguished manners, fine talkers, and very hospitable, but proud and haughty.

Several Old Testament passages furnish us with more reliable testimony as to the splendors of Jerusalem in ancient times, and the warm affection which all Israel felt for it. It is the city of the Lord, more beloved by Him than all the other cities of Jacob; glorious things were said of it.[365] The forty-seventh Psalm gives us a marvelous picture of it:

"With the joy of the whole earth
Is Mount Sion founded,
On the sides of the north,
The city of the great king.
Surround Sion, and encompass her:
Tell ye in her towers.
Set your hearts on her strength;
And distribute her houses,
That ye may relate it in another generation."

[363] Once in his Gospel, 5:17, and once in the Acts of the Apostles, 10:39, he speaks in a similar way, mentioning Jerusalem and Judea separately.

[364] Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin, 6, 11.

[365] Ps. 86:2 f.

What a joyous note rings through Psalm 121, wherein is described the holy blessedness of the pilgrims hastening to Jerusalem from all sides for the celebration of the great religious feasts!

"I rejoiced at the things that were said to me:
We shall go into the house of the Lord."

After a wearisome journey Jerusalem is reached:

"Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem."

Then are described its material and spiritual glories:

"Jerusalem, which is built as a city, which is compact together.
For thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord:
The testimony of Israel,
To praise the name of the Lord."

With what eager piety the pilgrim wishes all sorts of blessings for Jerusalem:

"Pray ye for the things that are for the peace of Jerusalem:
And abundance for them that love thee.
Let peace be in thy strength;
And abundance in thy towers,
For the sake of my brethren, and of my neighbors,
I spoke peace of thee.
Because of the house of the Lord our God,
I have sought good things for thee." [366]

It becomes our duty to describe,[367] but in simpler language, this city which inspired an entire people with such lively af-

[366] See also Ps. 136; Is. 2:2 f.; 60:1–22.

[367] See the scholarly article "Jérusalem" (by Legendre) in Vigouroux' *Dictionnaire de la Bible,* Vol. III, cols. 1317–1386. It contains an important bibliography. We refer our readers especially to the remarkable work by Fathers Vincent and Abel, *Jérusalem: Recherches de Topographie, d'Archéologie, et d'Histoire,* 2 vols., 1910–1912.

fection and which drew to itself, three times a year, "devout men out of every nation under heaven." [368]

Reaching Jerusalem from whatever side, the traveler, and with greater reason the pilgrim, experiences a keen emotion. He is, however, somewhat deceived if he comes before the ancient city by the south or by the north or, as is usually the case, by the west, traveling from Jaffa. In fact, to his eager eyes the city comes into view only in fragments nowise romantic and even not especially interesting. On the contrary, what a wonderful sight it presents to those who see it for the first time from the belvedere, which, so to speak, the Mount of Olives forms to the east! It is to that vantage point we must ascend—it takes not more than twenty minutes—if we would embrace with one glance the city as a whole (not, however, in its entirety) and enjoy its real beauty. There, better than anywhere else, we will understand the truth of these words of Pliny the Elder: *"Hierosolyma, non Judaeae modo."* [369] However little the sun may light it up or tint the buildings or emphasize the outlines, the sight is splendid, memorable.

What first strikes us, from the height of our observation platform, is the city's topographical situation. In spite of the changes and destruction during the past eighteen centuries, a trained eye has no difficulty in recognizing the remarkable geological outline of the ground on which Jerusalem was built. On three sides—east, south, and, to a great extent, on the west—the plateau that forms its base is surrounded by a deep ravine which in olden times was called, on the east, the valley of the Cedron and, on the other two sides, the valley of Hinnon. The former particularly attracts attention by its characteristic forms. These two enormous ravines descend very rapidly until they meet at the southeast corner near the ancient well of Rogel, from which point the drop is exceed-

[368] Acts 2:5.
[369] *Hist. Nat.*, V, 14.

ingly rapid to the Dead Sea, across a frightful desert. Thus located, the city seems to jut out as if on a promontory.[370]

What also strikes the observer is the sharp outline of the interior of the city. Yet, in many spots, the depressions and elevations of the ground have been singularly attenuated or have altogether disappeared in consequence of the many sieges—seventeen—that have heaped ruin on ruin. At more than one point it is necessary to dig through rubbish to a depth of sixty feet or more to reach the soil of the Jerusalem of David, or even that of Herod. The streets come and go in every direction, often narrow and winding, climbing and descending, as though following some whim of their own.[371] Although partly disguised by century-old accumulations of rubbish, there is a depression easy to perceive in the interior of the city, "about halfway between the two large exterior valleys. Starting north of the city, it runs south-southeast to meet the Cedron . . . thus tracing, across the whole length of the plateau, a perfectly sharp line of separation between the two parts, eastern and western." [372] It is called *El Wady,* "the Valley." Jerusalem is thus divided naturally into two masses of differing configuration, but closely co-ordinated with each other.

As the Psalmist [373] and other sacred writers remark, by its location the Holy City is a city of mountains. In this sense Isaias says: "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills." [374] This trait is quite exact, for, although Jerusalem is built on the central ridge, of which we have spoken above, it is surrounded by mountains in almost every direction. Only one mountain in its immediate neighbor-

370 Fillion and Nicole, *op. cit.,* plates XIV and XV.
371 Vincent, *Jérusalem,* I, 43, speaks knowingly of "bumpy, perilous streets."
372 *Ibid.,* I, 45.
373 Ps. 124:2.
374 Is. 2:2.

hood exceeds it in height: the Mount of Olives, which completely shuts off the eastern horizon.[375] The hill known as Mount Sion is the culminating point of the city, rising to an elevation of 2542 feet above sea level.

The embattled ramparts, with towers and bastions, which form a circuit three miles long about the city, deserve special mention. In their present form they go back to Soliman II (1520–1596). But to-day they are an ineffective barrier to stop an enemy coming to storm Jerusalem. They are, however, a very picturesque enclosure and for a long time sufficed to defend Jerusalem against incursions of Arab brigands. These walls are pierced by seven gates—three on the north side, one on the west, one on the east, and two on the south—which give access to the city. In Our Lord's time the ramparts were less extensive, for they did not then enclose Golgotha or the ground nearby. The towers were said to number about a hundred. Many of them rose well above other structures and gave to the northwest corner of the fortifications the special character which it still preserves. There it was that Herod the Great erected three towers, which went by the names of Mariamne, Phasael, and Hippicus. They were replaced by the *Gala'ah* or "citadel," commonly called the Tower of David.

The pilgrim of old, whose admiring words we quoted, according to Psalm 121, had good reason to cry out, at sight of the ancient capital, confined within a relatively small space: "Which is built as a city, which is compact together." This feature has characterized Jerusalem at all periods of its history. The ordinary houses and the sumptuous palaces and other edifices, sacred and profane, in Our Lord's time no doubt still more so than to-day, formed a remarkable agglomeration. It was an indescribable confusion of public and private buildings, topping one another and supporting one another, and rising above one another. The effect is astounding. The streets

[375] We will describe it later on.

must have formed a most chaotic net-work. The principal ones at least were paved with marble and were named.[376]

At the beginning of the Christian era, Jerusalem was spoken of as made up of four sections: to the south, the upper city, on the present Mount Sion; in the center, the lower city, called Acra; to the north, the new city, or Bezetha. The Temple with its courts and its various structures constituted a quarter by itself, on the site now occupied by the Mosques of Omar and *El Aksa.*

About the middle of the nineteenth century, Victor Guerin, a distinguished French Palestinologist, could still speak of the silent and deserted approaches to Jerusalem.[377] But for the past fifty years that solitude, which was not without a certain charm, has entirely disappeared. Big suburbs of very dissimilar and, for the most part, wretched buildings have sprung up, especially to the north and northwest of the city. The ceaseless immigration of European Jews is so expanding these outskirts that before long they will cover three or four times as much ground as the city, to the great esthetic loss of the latter.

Jerusalem to-day has about 65,000 inhabitants. It is not impossible that at the time of Christ the population reached this same figure. We should, however, add that, according to a number of authors, it was at that time scarcely 35,000 or 40,000 souls.

A Christian naturally wonders what has become, after all the assaults and destruction mentioned above, of the places sanctified in a special manner by the presence of Our Blessed Lord, more particularly during the last days of His life: the Cenacle, Gethsemani, the palaces of Caiphas and Herod, the pretorium, the Via Dolorosa, Calvary, the Holy Sepulchre,

[376] At the present time "four large streets, two lengthwise of the city, running north and south, and two crosswise, running east and west, mark off the city area somewhat like a checker-board, with relatively regular divisions in the center." They lead to four of the gates mentioned above. Vincent, *Jérusalem,* I, 52.

[377] *Jérusalem,* p. 186; see also De Vogué, *Jérusalem: Hier et Aujourd'hui,* pp. 1 f.

etc. A faithful tradition, that we can trace back, almost step by step, to the second century, has piously preserved their memory. Pilgrims, then, may with all confidence pray at these blessed spots,[378] assured that those places bore the imprint of the Master's sacred feet.

[378] We will point out their sites as we meet them in the Gospel narrative.

CHAPTER III

Christ's People

THE nation of which Jesus Christ deigned to become a member was externally as insignificant as the land on which God had established it. Yet it was a distinguished race to which the Lord God had for long centuries granted magnificent privileges precisely in view of the close union that was to exist between it and the Messias. In beautiful language St. Paul sums up these prerogatives, of which he was justly proud: he a "Hebrew, the son of a Hebrew." He says: "My brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongeth the adoption as of children, and the glory, and the testament, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all things, God blessed for ever." [379]

It was impossible in a few lines to draw a more glorious and truthful picture. God had adopted the Israelites as belonging to Him, as His very own, and He maintained fatherly relations with them. Thereby had He covered them with glory, a glory unique in the annals of the ancient world. With them He had entered into a special covenant at Sinai and gave them an admirable set of laws, calculated to make them a holy nation. They alone had received from Him a superior form of worship, which strongly and amazingly contrasted with the idolatrous and nearly always immoral practices of other peoples. What splendid promises for the future had been an-

[379] Rom. 9: 3–5.

nounced to them by numerous prophets, in the form of repeated oracles, foretelling the coming of the Messias and the pouring out of unspeakable graces in connection with that coming! The patriarchs call to our mind the illustrious names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their immediate descendants, that blessed source from which the Jewish people was sprung. In fine, the Apostle affirms that this last-mentioned prerogative is the most precious and honorable of all: out of Israel was to be born, according to His human nature, the Christ, possessing at the same time the divine nature.

I. Political Conditions of the Jews at the Time of Christ

At the time when the Gospel story opens, the Israelitic nation had lost much of its ancient greatness. Yet for some time longer it formed a state, apparently flourishing under the sceptre of Herod the Great and his sons. But let us go back a bit farther, the better to comprehend by what chain of circumstances this sad figure, the son of an Idumean father and an Arab mother, came to occupy the throne of David.

The Machabees' valiant resistance to the cruel persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes won a noble independence for the Jewish nation (161 B. C.), enabling it to conclude treaties of alliance with Rome and Sparta; and it led to these heroes themselves being installed at the head of their people, first as princes, regents, and high priests, then as priest-kings. This was the first time since the Babylonian Captivity that the Jews had true liberty.

This happy era, inaugurated by Judas Machabeus, extended, through the various fluctuations and troubles inherent in all human administrations, until the death of Queen Salome Alexandra.[380] The disturbances of this era were caused, on

[380] The following is a list of the princes who succeeded Judas: his brothers Jonathan (161–143) and Simon (143–135), John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon

the one hand, by the almost perpetual wars, often terminating fortunately; on the other hand, by intestinal strifes in which the two great sects of Sadducees and Pharisees were engaged. The public peace suffered from the contentions of these two parties to gain influence with the ruling princes, continually intriguing to recover power, whenever their adversaries had succeeded in ousting them.

Queen Alexandra left two sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. The crown legally belonged to the older, Hyrcanus, a prince of peaceful but weak character, to whom the Pharisees adhered. His spirited and energetic brother, Aristobulus, backed by the Sadducees, succeeded in seizing the royal dignity. Then appeared on the scene the Idumean Antipater, son of a rich and influential man, likewise named Antipater, or Antipas, who held the office of governor of Idumea in the reign of Alexander Janneus. His active ambition was well served by consummate ability and alertness. Under the impulse of that ambition, he became the real founder of the dynasty of the Herods. While governor of Idumea, after his father, he saw, on Alexandra's death, that his best chances lay in taking the side of Hyrcanus II, in forcefully defending that prince and thus gaining his confidence, and ruling the country in his name. He was successful in winning over to Hyrcanus'

(135–104), Aristobulus I (104–103), Alexander Janneus (103–76), his wife Alexandra (76–67). She is the only princess, besides Athalie, who reigned at Jerusalem. The Machabees are often called Hasmoneans. According to Josephus (*Ant.*, XII, vi, 1), this name comes from their ancestor Hasmon, the great-grandfather of the priest Mathathias, who was the first to raise the standard of revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. Cfr. 1 Mach. 2: 1–70. On this period of Jewish history see Josephus, *Ant.*, XII, XIII, and XIV, 1–4; H. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'Histoire et la Géographie de la Palestine d'après les Talmuds et les autres Sources Rabbiniques*, 1867; F. de Saulcy, *Histoire des Machabées ou Princes de la Dynastie Asmonéenne*, 1889; E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 3d ed., I, 210–290; O. Holtzmann, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, 1895, pp. 62–71; Fairweather, *From the Exile to the Advent*, 1895, pp. 133–170; J. Felten, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte, oder Judentum und Heidentum zur Zeit Christi und der Apostel*, 1910.

cause the King of the Nabataean Arabs of Petra, who prepared to come to Jerusalem with an army to overthrow the usurper Aristobulus, when it was learned that Pompey had reached Syria after defeating Mithridates (66 B. C.). Each of the rival parties implored the support of the Roman general, who drew near to Jerusalem with his forces. The followers of Hyrcanus opened the gates of the city to him; but Aristobulus, having determined to fight to the end, retreated with his followers to the Temple fortress and there sustained several months' siege. Pompey, finally victorious (65 B. C.), gratified his curiosity by entering the Holy of Holies. It is said that he was greatly impressed at finding no idol there and noting that the God adored by the Jews was incorporeal and invisible. He spared the Temple treasury and left for Rome, taking with him Aristobulus and numerous other captives, intended to grace his triumphal chariot.[381] On leaving, he reinstated Hyrcanus II into his priestly office, but as a vassal of Rome.

We will not undertake to describe in detail the sad condition of the Jewish state from the time of the first intervention of Rome until that of Caesar (47 B. C.). The country was crushed with taxes. Soon it was again a prey to civil war, the family of Aristobulus II rising up once more against Hyrcanus, whose defense had to be taken up by Gabinius, proconsul of Syria. However, Antipater, seeing that henceforth all his hopes lay on the side of the Romans, did not fail to win their favor, without entirely abandoning Hyrcanus. Keen discernment helped him to ascertain among the eminent personages contending for power at Rome, those who had the best chance. To them he turned, lent them assistance on occasion, flattered them, and from these maneuvers derived an advan-

[381] See the description of this triumphal procession in Plutarch, *Pompey*, 45, and Pliny the Elder, *Hist. Nat.*, VII, 98.

tage for himself as also for his two sons. And so, when Caesar gave Hyrcanus the title of ethnarch, he made Antipater governor of Judea.

Antipater died by poison (43 B. C.). Of his two sons, Phasael, the elder, was appointed by the Romans governor of Jerusalem; the second, Herod, was made administrator of Galilee. They were thus launched on the path of fortune. Some time later Herod was placed at the head of the Roman forces of Celosyria, then raised, as was his brother, to the rank of tetrarch. But he came near losing it all just when his hopes were thus expanding. The last scions of the Machabee family momentarily succeeded in seizing the power again, and Herod ran the gravest danger. Yet he managed to escape and betook himself to Rome, there to plead his cause with Antony and Octavius. His move was crowned with success, for a *senatus consultus* appointed him king of the Jews (40 B. C.). However, there remained the task of conquering his kingdom, his enemies being well organized. Notwithstanding the many signs of decadence shown by the last of the Hasmonean princes and the bloody dissensions that continued to be stirred up in the country, the people were fond and proud of them because of the noble blood that flowed in their veins, whereas Herod, the Idumean, was regarded as a usurper of the throne of Israel and at most only half a Jew—this is the expression Josephus uses.[382] Thus, though he was aided by the Romans, it took three years for Herod to make himself master of Palestine, beginning with Jaffa and Galilee. At length, in the year 37, after a short siege, he entered Jerusalem, where he avenged himself in a cold-blooded manner by massacring a considerable number of persons who were devoted to the Machabee family.

[382] Alexander Janneus, after seizing Idumaea, forced the inhabitants to adopt Judaism. But that did not alter their origin.

We will not delay to describe the events of his long reign of thirty-seven years (40–4 B. C.).[383] It will suffice to indicate its broad lines and to sketch briefly the moral character of this man under whose government the Savior came into the world and whose race continued to rule Palestine, in whole or in part, for more than a century.

Historians usually divide Herod's reign into three parts. He devoted the first period (37–25) to consolidating his throne, either by endeavoring more and more to win the friendship of the Romans, especially of Octavius, who became emperor under the name of Augustus (30), or by blotting out, one after another and without the least scruple, several of the Hasmonean family, who were still living and whose power and activity he feared: the granddaughter of John Hyrcanus, his wife Mariamne,[384] whom he loved intensely and whom he had married in the hope that such a union would attach the friends of that great dynasty to him; his brother-in-law Antigone; his mother-in-law Alexandra; and the aged Hyrcanus II. The second part of his reign (25–13) was a period of great prosperity. It was at that time he yielded completely to his inclinations for magnificence and built or enlarged and adorned several important cities at various points in Palestine; among others, maritime Caesarea, which he made into a considerable port; in Samaria the ancient capital of the kingdom of the schismatic tribes, which he named Sebaste in honor of Augustus;[385] and Jericho in the Jordan valley. At Jerusalem and elsewhere he built palaces, fortresses, and other edifices. His last years were a period of domestic strife, of low and bloody intrigues, such as have always existed in Oriental courts.

[383] On the latter of these two dates, which at first may seem abnormal, see the pages below devoted to the question of the year of Christ's birth.

[384] Or Mariamme, according to a variant spelling.

[385] The Greek word *Sebaste* means "august."

While Herod was proud to follow in Solomon's footsteps in reconstructing the Temple at Jerusalem, he also imitated him in his polygamy. He had as many as ten wives, nine of whom lived with him at the same time. They bore him eight sons and six daughters. Between his sister Salome, who was excessively devoted to him, and the two sons whom he had by Mariamne, there were terrible dissensions. These strifes led to the death of the two sons, whom their father ordered to be strangled at Sebaste (7 B. C.).

In general, Herod's reign was marked by peaceful foreign relations. With the Arabs there were some conflicts, ably and vigorously conducted by the King and turned to his advantage and glory. About the year 23, the Emperor Augustus added to Herod's dominion the provinces of Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanaea, situated northeast of Palestine. For a considerable time before, he had succeeded in clearing the first of those districts of the brigands that infested it.

From this rapid sketch it may be surmised that Herod's conduct was in almost constant opposition to the political preferences and religious feelings of the majority of his subjects. That opposition was nearly always free and deliberate. No doubt, by relying on Rome, he succeeded in enlarging his states, in more easily overcoming his enemies, and in making Palestine flourishing. But, at the same time, he aroused the well nigh universal discontent of the Jews, who, in their theocratic pride, heartily detested the great pagan city and would not tolerate its interference in their affairs, even indirectly. Herod, in spite of his independent manner, was nothing more than a vassal of the Romans and was taunted with his Idumean birth. Even less was he forgiven his intrusion onto the throne and his savage cruelty towards the legitimate heirs. He also aroused general indignation at the outset of his reign by his harsh treatment of the priestly aristocracy and by taking all political influence from the Sanhedrin. For

this reason the Essenes [386] and a large number of the Pharisees refused to take the oath of obedience to him.

From the religious point of view, everything leads one to believe that Herod was a thorough skeptic and infidel. His zeal for the Temple was chiefly a matter of ostentation. Even in that, while rejoicing the hearts of the true believers of Israel, that is, most members of the nation, he found means of sorely offending them, for he placed a golden eagle on the principal gate of the sanctuary in honor of the Romans, and he gave free reign to his pagan inclinations and his admiration for Greek civilization by building in several cities of Palestine, even in the heart of Jerusalem, theaters, amphitheaters, and hippodromes, which displeased the people exceedingly. He even went so far as to erect temples dedicated to Augustus and Rome.

We can well understand that such conduct, so openly manifested, alienated from Herod the affection of most of his subjects at the beginning of his reign, and made them forget certain acts of personal generosity: for instance, the sacrifice of gold and silver from his palace to buy grain for the people at a time of famine, and various advantages that he obtained from Rome for the Jewish nation.

Not only was he endowed with a robust physical constitution, but he also possessed great energy of character. Unhappily it was always with a selfish aim, to obtain power and hold it, that he exercised this vigor. He was a capable man, but his ability was served by a wile, alternating with heartless cruelty that glutted itself in streams of blood, from the first days of his reign to the very last. We saw above that no family considerations stopped him, once his exceedingly jealous ambition made him see, rightly or wrongly, any serious rival for his throne. The Gospel gives another example, no less horrible,

[386] On this Jewish sect we will give some details further on.

of that cruelty which became proverbial. Toward the close of his life, the golden eagle mentioned above was torn down by the disciples of two very popular rabbis at Jerusalem; he had forty-two of these disciples burned alive, and their teachers with them. On his death bed, conscious that he was universally hated, and thinking of the joy that would be felt at the news of his death, Herod ordered the leading notables of the country to be assembled in the hippodrome at Jericho and to be massacred the moment he should draw his last breath; in this way, he figured, his death would occasion a flood of bitter tears. Happily this barbarous order was not carried out; but that which he issued three days before dying, to execute his eldest son, Antipater, was only too well obeyed.

Such is the sorry figure that answers to the name of "Herod the Great." His history casts a sinister light on the condition of the Jewish people in the period just before the birth of the Messiah, the mild, peaceful, true King of Israel.[387]

Herod made three wills. By the last one, cancelling the previous two, he divided his states among three of his sons: to the eldest, Archelaus, he bequeathed Judea and Samaria, with the title of king; to Antipas, he left Galilee and Peraea; to Philip, the northeastern districts, *i. e.,* Batanaea, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and the territory of Paneas. To be valid, however, this will had to be approved by Augustus. The three heirs, therefore, set out for Rome one after the other to validate their claims and to obtain the Emperor's consent. They did indeed obtain it; but, instead of the royal dignity, Archelaus saw himself granted merely that of ethnarch; his two brothers were named tetrarchs.[388] Nevertheless, as the Gospel account

[387] On Herod and his sons, see F. de Saulcy, *Histoire d'Hérode, Roi des Juifs,* 1867; Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'Histoire et la Géographie de la Palestine, d'après les Talmuds;* Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 3d ed., I, 291–425; O. Holtzmann, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte,* pp. 71–81; and especially Josephus, *Ant.,* XIV–XVIII; *Bell. Iud.,* I, ii.

[388] Etymologically the word *tetrarch* means one who administers the govern-

tells us, popular speech, which does not always worry about shades of meaning and which is prone to expand rather than diminish titles of honor, applied the title of king to Archelaus [389] and Antipas,[390] probably also to Philip.

Right after his father's death and before leaving for Rome, Archelaus had to suppress a sedition that broke out at Jerusalem. His soldiers, following his orders, pitilessly slew three thousand Jews, among them some pilgrims who had come to celebrate the Passover. This barbarous act produced a most painful impression, in consequence of which, no sooner had the prince himself departed than the inhabitants of the Holy City sent a delegation of notables to Rome to petition the Emperor not to impose him on them as king.

During the absence of Herod's three heirs, much graver disorders took place, not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Palestine. Their occasion was the arrival of a Roman procurator, Sabinus by name, who was sent by the proconsul of Syria to safeguard the personal property and treasury of the deceased king until the question of succession should be definitively settled. The proconsul himself, the famous Varus, who was defeated a few years later by Arminius in the Teutoburg Forest (A. D. 9), lost no time in going up to Jerusalem to examine things at closer range. On his departure, he left a whole legion at Sabinus' disposal. This interference of the Romans irritated the Jews in the highest degree. Meantime the Feast of Pentecost arrived, and a violent strife broke out between the Jewish patriots and the legionaries in the very vestibule of the Temple: the roof of cedar wood was burned.

ment of the fourth of a region that is divided into four parts. The word gradually broadened and came to be applied to subordinate administrators, inferior to kings and ethnarchs, but enjoying some of the prerogatives of royalty. We have seen that Herod the Great himself received this title before being made a king. *Ethnarch* means: chief of a nation.

[389] Matt. 2:22.

[390] Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14.

Sabinus having dared to take four hundred talents[391] from the treasury of the sanctuary, the mob lay siege to him in Herod's palace, where he had shut himself in with his troops. This was the signal of revolt through the length and breadth of the land. At Jericho, in Peraea, in southern Judea, in Galilee especially, zealous patriots who hated both Rome and Herod preached rebellion and placed themselves at the head of numerous bands. The suppression was frightful. Varus again rushed in, this time with his whole army, and had no difficulty in overcoming, first in Galilee, then in Judea and Jerusalem, poorly organized and imperfectly armed men. A great number of Jews were sold as slaves or crucified. Varus did not return to Syria until he had restored complete quiet.

Archelaus, son of Herod and the Samaritan Malthace, on his return from Rome was unsuccessful in his efforts to allay the antipathy he had inspired in his subjects from the very first. Along with Josephus' testimony on this point, we have that of St. Matthew.[392] Although the high priesthood among the Jews was regularly a life office, the new ethnarch presumed to depose several high priests during his short administration. Then, too, while his first wife was still living, he married his brother's widow, who was herself married to the famous Juba, king of Mauritania. By countless acts he continued to exercise so hateful a tyranny that his subjects complained a second time and accused him before Augustus. He was exiled by the Emperor to Vienne in Gaul (A. D. 6), where he died some time afterward.

Judea and Samaria, which formed his states, then passed definitely under Roman control. Instead, however, of being attached to the proconsular province of Syria, because of the special religious circumstances and the insubordinate char-

391 A talent of silver was equal to about $1,700. The total sum therefore was about $680,000.

392 Matt. 2:22.

acter of the Jews, they were placed under the jurisdiction of a special governor,[393] taken from the order of knights. Up to the death of Augustus there were three of these governors: Coponius, Marcus Ambibulus, and Annius Rufus; then two in the reign of Tiberius: Valerius Gratus (A. D. 15–26) and Pontius Pilate (26–36). We are, of course, particularly interested in this latter. For the time being, we will omit what concerns the odious and cowardly part he played during the Savior's Passion and will limit ourselves to a rapid sketch of his character and the beginning of his rule.

It is certain that the Jewish state of mind at that period made the task of a Roman governor in Judea extremely difficult. On the other hand, Pilate possessed neither the tact nor the capacity needed to surmount the obstacles inherent in the situation.[394] Despising the Jews and understanding nothing of their religious feelings, he made a pretense of governing them after his own will and of making them bow to him in everything and in spite of everything. Being, however, at times as weak and irresolute as he was ordinarily unbending, he himself contributed to lessening his authority. This is why in many instances he was vanquished by those whom he thought he could easily overcome, and at length was completely crushed by them. His obstinacy and lack of diplomacy more than once gave rise to acts of revolt which he then had to suppress in blood.

In the very first months after his installation, Pilate cut the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the quick. His predecessors, adapting themselves to the religious sensibilities of the Jews,

[393] His official title was *procurator;* in Greek, *ἐπίτροπος.*

[394] The celebrated Jewish philosopher Philo, in his *Legatio ad Caium,* XXXVIII, portrays Pilate in terms that are far from flattering; there is certainly some exaggeration in his description, but the general correctness of it is amply confirmed by history. See also Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 4th ed., I, 488–492, and Fillion, art. "Pilate" in Vigouroux' *Dictionnaire de la Bible,* Vol. V, cols. 429–434.

were wont to remove from the standards of the military detachment that garrisoned Jerusalem every image or effigy that might, to the eyes of an Israelite, appear of an idolatrous nature. Pilate, on the contrary, decided that the soldiers sent by him to the Holy City should enter with their insignia, adorned with all the usual emblems. Great was the wrath of the inhabitants when they perceived the insult. In large numbers they went off to Caesarea, the governor's ordinary place of residence. For five days they protested, and so forcefully withal that Pilate, who had first made up his mind to massacre them, was obliged to yield, seeing that they were all ready to die rather than bear such an affront.[395] Later, despite this humiliating lesson, he committed a like fault by hanging, on the walls of the palace where he lived whenever sojourning at Jerusalem, certain golden shields dedicated to Tiberius and ornamented with idolatrous inscriptions or symbols. An insurrection all but broke loose. Warned by the Jews, the Emperor himself gave orders for the promptest possible removal of the cause of the disturbance.[396] Later on Pilate took the liberty of confiscating a considerable sum from the sacred treasury of the Temple for the building of a magnificent aqueduct to convey water to the capital from the reservoirs of Solomon, south of Bethlehem. Such a use of the funds of the sanctuary was, to the quite legitimate feelings of the Jews, a veritable sacrilege. Violent disturbances took place, which were cruelly suppressed.[397]

Some years after the Savior's death a last deed of Pilate contributed to hasten the hour of his fall. A number of Samaritans, misled by an impostor, set to work making excavations on Mount Gerizim near Nablus, in the hope of unearth-

[395] Cfr. Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 1–2; *Bell. Iud.*, II, ix, 2–4.

[396] Philo, *Legatio ad Caium*, XXXVIII; Eusebius, *H. E.*, II, vi.

[397] St. Luke, 13: 1, refers briefly to another tragic event in Pilate's administration.

ing certain sacred vessels which, they were assured, Moses had concealed there before his death. The governor had them mercilessly slain. Their exasperated relations and friends brought their complaints to the legate of Syria. The latter, perceiving that Pilate had become intolerable to the people, sent him to Rome, where he might try to free himself from blame before the Emperor. But he did not reach Rome until after Tiberius' death.

The last events of his life are shrouded in mystery; and they were, moreover, distorted by legend at an early date. We do not even know at what place or in what manner he died. According to Eusebius,[398] he was banished to Vienne in Gaul and there, overwhelmed by misfortune, committed suicide.

Let us return to the two other heirs of Herod the Great. Antipas, whom the Gospels designate only by the patronymic name of Herod,[399] was likewise a son of Malthace. We know but few details of his long rule (4 B. C.–A. D. 39). He had his father's taste for founding new cities and enlarging old ones. In Galilee he rebuilt and fortified Sepphoris, which the Romans had destroyed at the time of the insurrection mentioned above. He then built, on the western shore of Lake Genesareth, the rich and beautiful city of Tiberias, so named in honor of Tiberius, and made it his capital. He was fond of pomp and pleasure. The story of his incestuous marriage with Herodias will come up in connection with the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Over a question of boundaries he had a dispute with Aretas, king of the Nabataean Arabs, which developed into open war, and he suffered a shameful defeat (A. D. 36). Tiberius directed the proconsul of Syria to march against Aretas to avenge the tetrarch; but as the Emperor died shortly after

[398] *H. E.*, II, 7. On the legends, some of them friendly and some unfriendly, which grew up about the name of this personage, see Fillion, art. "Pilate," *op. cit.*, Vol. V, cols. 433 f.

[399] Cfr. Matt. 14:1–6; Mark 6:14–22; 8:15; Luke 3:1, 19; 8:3; 9:7, 9; 13:31; 23:7–15; see also Acts 4:27; 13:1.

(A. D. 37), his order was not carried out, and the king of Petraea kept the conquered territory.

The next year Agrippa I came to Palestine from Rome with the title of king; his sister Herodias, consumed with ambition, was vexed that he had been preferred to her husband by the new Emperor, Caius Caligula. She persuaded Antipas to go to Rome and there try to obtain the royal dignity also. Caius, far from granting his request, found fault with him for having unduly accumulated supplies of arms, and exiled him to Lyons, where he died.

The Savior's childhood and most of His public life were passed in the territory of Herod Antipas. The Gospels inform us that the tetrarch's attention and curiosity were aroused by His preaching and especially by His miracles.[400] They also mention Herod's infamous treatment of Christ at the time of His Passion.[401]

We are not here concerned with Herod Agrippa I, whose name we had occasion to mention above. He plays no part in the Gospel period, properly so called. He it was who ordered the death of the Apostle St. James and who held the same end in store for St. Peter.[402] He perished wretchedly under the blow of divine retribution (A. D. 44). Thanks to having obtained the favor of the Emperors Caligula and Claudius, he succeeded in uniting under his scepter all the territory over which his grandfather, Herod the Great, had ruled. He was followed by his son Agrippa II, with whom the Herodian sway in Palestine ceased. It was before this second Agrippa that St. Paul appeared at Caesarea.[403]

Philip, a son of King Herod and Cleopatra, by birth a Jew of Jerusalem, was a mild and peaceful ruler, who made his

[400] Matt. 14:1 f.; Mark 6:14–16; Luke 9:7–9.
[401] Luke 23:6–12.
[402] Acts 12:1–4.
[403] Acts 25:23; 26:32.

subjects happy, going from city to city to administer justice. He, too, had a taste for sumptuous buildings. He enlarged and embellished Paneas the name of which he changed to Caesarea. He rebuilt the village of Bethsaida, located near the point where the Jordan enters Lake Tiberias. This town he surnamed Julias, in honor of Augustus' daughter. He died A. D. 33 or 34.

Let us pass from Herod's three sons to the Roman Emperors under whose jurisdiction they exercised their semi-royal office. We note that the Gospels name only two of them: Augustus, the first to be clothed with that lofty title, and his successor, Tiberius. The entire life of Christ was passed in their reigns.

Augustus is mentioned but once,[404] on the occasion of the Savior's birth. For about fifteen years he had enjoyed unlimited power over those immense territories that the Romans had little by little subdued. That Empire, made up of such varied peoples, he capably organized in a way to give it remarkable unity and to keep it all under obedience, through the intermediary of energetic officials who represented him in every locality. Very often and truly has it been said that at that time peace reigned after a long period of wars. So truly did it reign that the Senate decreed, between 13 and 9 B. C., the erection on the Campus Martius of an *altare pacis,*[405] which has recently been unearthed. The real "Prince of Peace" could now appear. While the empire founded by Augustus has long since disappeared, the Kingdom of the little Babe of Bethlehem will last forever.

At his death (A. D. 14) Augustus was succeeded by Tiberius, whom he had associated with himself in the empire ten years before. This new reign, consequently, corresponded with the largest and most important part of Our Lord's life. Of

[404] Luke 2: 1.

[405] An altar dedicated to peace.

Tiberius, too, there is but one direct mention in the Gospel;[406] but it is to him that historians of Christ allude whenever they speak of Caesar.[407] At the first very fine qualities shone forth in this prince, especially those of a courageous and capable military leader, of an excellent orator, and of a competent ruler. Later on the most shameful vices completely tarnished his glory. He died in the year 37, at the age of seventy-eight, after reigning twenty-three years.

Such were the men who, from far or near, ruled over Palestine at the time of Our Lord; and such were the political conditions of the country. In short, on the day of Pompey's entry into Jerusalem, more or less in the guise of a conqueror, the sway of Rome over the Jewish people had begun. Thenceforth it never ceased, despite certain semblances of liberty left to the people and to their immediate rulers. That dominance, now circumspect and now stern or even cruel when the Jews rebelled, continued growing stronger and stronger up to the complete subjection and total destruction of the Jewish state in the year 70. That sway brought about a close contact between two nationalities whose spirit, customs, and religions were hopelessly at variance. Thus, save for rare exceptions, did Rome find among the Jews, especially when she became completely dominant in Judea, an intense hostility which, even though it ordinarily remained latent, became terrible and dangerous whenever some unforeseen incident made it boil over like a volcano. Never could these children of Israel, whose glorious past and wild hopes for the future puffed them up with pride, submit in mind and heart to pagan Rome. The latter accomplished an external conquest of the country; never did it hold sway over the hearts of the people. The obligation of paying taxes to Rome was looked upon as a veritable ig-

[406] Luke 3:1.

[407] Matt. 22:17, 21; Mark 12:14, 17; Luke 20:22, 25; 23:2; John 19:12, 15.

nominy, to which they submitted only by compulsion. The Romans answered hatred with contempt. As for the outbursts of revolt, they were promptly quenched in blood.

We would not sufficiently acquaint our readers with the political organization of the Jewish people in the time of Christ if we failed to mention the Sanhedrin.[408] This was a sort of senate or superior national assembly which at that time possessed considerable authority in the administration of the country's internal affairs. It would seem that its institution goes back to the close of the Babylonian Captivity. The Jews who returned from Chaldea after Cyrus' emancipation decree, felt the need of having an assembly of this sort to decide a number of cases relative to their reinstallation. The Books of Esdras and Nehemias show us,[409] in fact, such a senate duly organized, having official relations with the Persian rulers, directing the building of the Temple, issuing orders to their coreligionists, and threatening the refractory with excommunication. The like was true during the Greek period.[410] At a later date the Roman proconsul Gabinius (57–55 B. C.), while governing the province of Syria, created as many as five Sanhedrins, empowered with the political and judicial administration of as many special districts of Palestine.[411] One of these bodies, sitting at Jerusalem, finally eclipsed the other four and acquired jurisdiction in religious matters over the whole Jewish world. This jurisdiction was quite extensive even under the Roman sway. It included civil and religious cases of some importance; for instance, the charge of idolatry against a city, false prophecies, enlarging of the Temple courts. The Sanhedrin likewise formed a high court of justice.

[408] A word closely imitating the Greek word *συνέδριον*, meaning: "a place where one sits"; then, by extension, "an assembly."

[409] Esdras 5:5; 6:9–17; 10:8; Neh. 2:16; 5:7; 7:5, etc.

[410] Cf. 1 Mach. 12:33–36; 13:36; 2 Mach. 4:44; 11:27; Josephus, *Ant.*, XII, iii, 8, and xvi, 5.

[411] Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, v, 4.

It watched over the purity of doctrine. It was in this capacity that it sent its delegates to John the Baptist to ask for certain explanations in the matter of his preaching and baptizing.[412] And it was in pursuance of the same end that it forcibly haled Christ before its bar and condemned Him after a pretense of trial. The Romans, while stripping the Sanhedrin of all political influence, left it certain privileges, among others that of pronouncing death sentences. But these it was forbidden to carry out without the governor's formal authorization. A day came when Pilate ironically called this to mind.[413]

The Sanhedrin was composed of seventy-one members belonging to three different classes of Jewish society. There were the chief priests, *i. e.,* the leading members of the sacerdotal aristocracy; the doctors of the law, of whom we shall have more to say presently, and the "ancients" or notables, representing the civil artistocracy. The High Priest then in office was the official president [414] of this triple body, which ordinarily met in a hall located in one of the auxiliary buildings of the Temple.[415]

II. Social Conditions

If we were writing an archaeology of Judaism in the first century of our era, there would be wonderful things to relate on this vast theme. But we have occasion to treat the subject here only from the viewpoint of our Savior's life.

The constitution of the family holds the first place in our attention. At all epochs of their long history, family life has been held in great honor among the Jews, by its spirit of purity and sincere union. In that respect Israel gave a fine example to the nations about it. This was largely due to its re-

[412] John 1:19–28.
[413] John 18:31.
[414] Matt. 26:57; John 18:13 f.; Acts 5:21, 27; 7:1; 23:2.
[415] Matt. 2:4; 16:21; 27:41; Mark 8:31; Luke 22:52, etc. On these different points, see Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 2d ed., I, 188–214.

ligious superiority. Long before the birth of Christ, the author of Psalm 127 recited the charms of that life in gracious and glowing terms:

> "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord:
> that walk in His ways.
> For thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands:
> blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.
> Thy wife as a fruitful vine,
> on the sides of thy house.
> Thy children as olive plants,
> round about thy table.
> Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
> that feareth the Lord."

In the time of Christ, this pious and touching ideal was realized in many a home in Palestine.

The family is based on marriage, an event regarded among all ancient peoples as both grave and joyous. Our Lord makes frequent allusion to the wedding customs of His compatriots. For the most part they have persisted in Palestine even among Catholics and Greek Orthodox. One of these practices, quite at variance with European custom, but accepted in all the Biblical Orient, is revealed by the significant formula, *"In resurrectione . . . neque nubent, neque nubentur,"*[416] which we can translate only by a paraphrase: "In the resurrection . . . they [the men] will neither marry nor [will the women] be given in marriage." This form of expression indicates the altogether passive part of the woman in this important social affair. She herself did not have the right to choose her husband, any more than Arab women have to-day. That choice was her father's affair.[417] And she not only received

[416] Matt. 22:30; cfr. Mark 12:25. The Vulgate text is a very exact translation of the Greek οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται.

[417] St. Paul supposes the existence of a similar practice at Corinth; cfr. 1 Cor. 7:26–28.

no dowry, but was given to him who had asked her hand only for a sum of money, previously agreed upon, which varied according to his greater or less wealth. The woman was, therefore, in a certain sense, bought; a practice which necessarily put her in a position of inferiority. Betrothal, having the force of law, preceded the marriage and often lasted a whole year.

The marriage celebration was accompanied by ceremonies and festivities which the Bible describes in many passages. The Gospel speaks of "the friend of the bridegroom," [418] whole rôle almost corresponded to that of our groomsman. After serving as a go-between for the future couple during the period of betrothal, he had the duty of arranging the wedding feast, the most interesting ceremony of which is so well set forth in the parable of the Ten Virgins.[419] There was a solemn and noisy procession at nightfall by the light of torches and lamps, to escort the elegantly dressed bride [420] to her husband's home. The nuptial festivities lasted for several days, accompanied by as sumptuous feasting as the financial condition of the young couple would permit.[421] The parents and friends were, of course, invited to take part and they dressed in their finest clothes for the feast.[422]

Although polygamy was still authorized among the Jews, happily it remained the exception. But the same was not true of divorce, which was at times oddly abused, to such a point that the disciples of the famous Rabbi Hillel, well known for their laxity, said it was licit "for any cause whatsoever";[423] they even went on to say there was sufficient cause if the unfortunate wife had prepared the food poorly, and they shame-

[418] John 3:29.
[419] Matt. 25:1–13.
[420] Apoc. 21:2.
[421] Matt. 22:1–11; John 2:1–10.
[422] Matt. 22:11 f.
[423] Matt. 19:3; cfr. Josephus, *Ant.*, IV, viii, 23.

lessly sanctioned divorce if the husband should see a more beautiful woman.[424] The Divine Master forever suppressed the concession made by Moses "because of the hardness of their hearts."

Children, especially boys,[425] were eagerly desired and, following the righteous sentiment of the ancient Jews,[426] large families were regarded as a special blessing; but barren wives suffered, no less than in the time of Anna, a sort of opprobrium.[427] Many sayings of the Savior point out the affection that should reign between parents and their children.[428]

At a later point we shall have occasion to notice how much Christ Himself loved the little ones, who are given quite a considerable place in the Gospels. Several times Our Lord mentions them as models of the Christian spirit. Yet nowhere does He refer to the education they received in His time. What information we have on this subject comes from Philo, Josephus, and the rabbis. Thanks to these data we know that it was very elaborate in religious matters and not at all neglected from the intellectual point of view. In the words of Philo, "the Jews regard their laws as divine revelations. That is why they are taught to know them in early childhood; therefore do they bear the image of the Law in their souls [429] . . . It is, so to speak, on leaving their swaddling clothes and they learn from their parents and teachers . . . to believe in God, the sole Father and Creator of the world." [430] Josephus asserts that every Jewish child receives this religious instruction as soon as he is old enough to learn.[431]

[424] See Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Matthieu,* pp. 117 f., 368–374.
[425] John 16:21.
[426] Ps. 126:3–5; 127:3 f.
[427] 1 Kings 1:1–18; Luke 1:24 f.
[428] Matt. 10:37; Luke 11:13, etc.
[429] *Legatio ad Caium,* XXXI.
[430] *Ibid.,* XVI.
[431] *Ant.,* IV, viii, 12; *Contra Apion.,* III, 17, etc.

Israelitic parents showed a most praiseworthy zeal in this direction. But they were likewise desirous of having their boys attend the elementary schools which, according to the Talmud, existed at that time throughout Palestine. These schools were given the appropriate name of *Beth-ha-Sepher,* "house of the book," because the little *Talmidim,* or "scholars," there learned especially to read, rarely to write. The book placed in their hands was a parchment roll on which were penned various passages of the Hebrew Bible. Of each Jewish scholar we might say what St. Paul later wrote to his beloved Timothy, whose mother was Jewish: "From childhood you learned the holy letters." [432] The establishment of the Palestinian schools is said to go back to Simon ben Chetach, a brother of Queen Alexandra. In small localities, where it was not possible to install these schools, the children met in the synagogue and the caretaker became their instructor, so far as he was able.[433]

Closely associated as they were by blood and religion, the Jews' relations with one another bore an imprint of sincere heartiness. Especially in the popular classes did they love one another like members of the same family, generously assisting one another. Their form of greeting, in its simplest expression, was the same as to-day: "Peace be with you!" [434] to which one replies: "With you, peace." But when two Israelites met on the road, even though unacquainted with each other, they exchanged endless compliments, as is still the style among the Arabs. This is why Our Lord, when sending out His Apostles to begin their preaching through the cities and villages of Galilee, admonished them not to lose in vain phrases

[432] 2 Tim. 3: 15.

[433] On these elementary schools, see Joseph Simon, *L'Éducation et l'Instruction des Enfants chez les Juifs d'après la Bible et le Talmud,* 3d ed., 1879. Further on we will speak of the higher schools.

[434] This was likewise Christ's habitual manner of greeting His disciples. Cfr. Luke 24: 36; John 20: 19, 21, 26. All the Epistles of St. Paul and of St. Peter open with this same salutation. See also Matt. 10: 12; 3 John 14, etc.

a time that was precious for spreading the Gospel.[435] Kissing, even among men, was the custom when meeting as well as when separating,[436] or as a sign of affection.[437]

But the upper class, composed of the priests, doctors of the Law, Pharisees, the richest and most influential citizens, often looked down with ridiculous pride upon "the people of the soil," as they called them, who had received no higher education and who, therefore, were held to have no right to any consideration.[438] Here and there in the pages of the Talmud appear haughty Pharisees who, from the height of the pulpit which they occupied as doctors, contemptuously looked down upon the common people, on the pretext that "the ink of the wise man is more precious than the blood of martyrs." [439] Such was that doctor of the Law who was accustomed to offer up this prayer at the close of his lectures: "I thank Thee, my Lord God, that my lot has been appointed among those who frequent the house of knowledge and not among those who labor at the street corners. For I rise early and they rise early. At break of day I apply myself to the words of the Law; but they, to vain things. I work and they work. I work and I receive a reward; they work and they receive none. I haste to eternal life, while they haste to the abyss." [440] Might we not think we were listening to the continuation of the prayer of the proud Pharisee in the parable? [441] How much more admirable are these other words, almost identical in form, but so different in meaning, said to be those of the doctors of Jamnia, after the destruction of Jerusalem: "I am the creature of God; so is my neighbor like-

[435] Cfr. Luke 10:4.
[436] Luke 7:45; 15:20. This custom still exists in the East.
[437] Matt. 26:48 f.
[438] John 7:49; Matt. 9:11, etc.
[439] An Arab proverb.
[440] Berakhoth, 28, b.
[441] Luke 18:11 f.

wise. I have my occupation in the city, he has his in the fields. Early in the morning I go to my work and he goes to his. As he does not grow proud over his work, neither do I derive vanity from mine. What if this thought came to your mind: I do big things and he does little things; we have learned that faithful labor, whether it create great things or produce ordinary things, leads to the same end." [442]

The texts we have just quoted allude to manual labor. From contemporary writings we know that it was generally held in high esteem by our Savior's countrymen. The Gospels and other New Testament writings give us some idea of the activities of workmen in Palestine at that time. In fact, they show us a certain number of artisans at their tasks: fishermen (*Matt.* 4: 18–29; *John* 21: 3 f.), stone-cutters (*Luke* 23: 53), tailors (*Mark* 2: 21), masons (*Matt.* 21: 42), weavers (*John* 19: 29), fullers (*Mark* 9: 3), tent-makers (*Acts* 18: 3), carpenters (*Mark* 6: 3), vine-dressers (*Matt.* 20: 1–14).[443]

But one should go especially to the Talmud for a good acquaintance with Jewish life from this point of view in the first century of our era.[444] It tells us of the chief doctors recommending manual labor from natural and supernatural motives: "Labor is lofty, for it reanimates its master, that is, the man who engages in it"; "Let a man accept work that is repugnant to him, provided he can perform it alone"; "What a value labor has in God's eyes!" Again, it urgently admonishes parents to place their children in some apprenticeship: "For a man not to teach his son a trade, is to make him a highway robber." And in another place, at the side of the la-

[442] Berakhoth, 17, a.

[443] Cf. Schwalm, *La Vie Privée du Peuple Juif*, pp. 206–221, 242–246, 303 f., etc.

[444] See F. Delitzsch, *Handwerkerleben zur Zeit Christi, ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*, 1868; Fillion, *Essais d'Exégèse*, 1884, pp. 239–266, and S. Meyer, *Arbeit und Handwerk im Talmud*, 1878.

borer it shows us, by a charming picture of the two of them together, his life companion, ever proud of her husband's occupation: "Even when the man is only a wool-comber, his wife calls him to the threshhold and sits down beside him." Deeds have a power that is great in a way other than words. There was a law designating the personages, distinguished either by their position or by their learning, whom everyone had to bow to when they passed along the street. Artisans at their work were the only ones dispensed from this formality; a special clause allowed them to remain seated and to keep at their work when one of those "honorable" men passed by.

In Herod's long reign, Jewish workmen at first were not very fortunate, because of the political disturbances in the country. After those years, many of them enjoyed prosperity, especially at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple. Nearly twenty thousand well-paid workmen were employed in that great undertaking. Besides architects, stone-cutters, masons, and carpenters, there were gilders and goldsmiths, sculptors, weavers, and embroiderers, who were assigned, each according to his specialty, to the work of beautifying the different parts of the magnificent edifice.

One of the most interesting circumstances of manual labor among the Jews at the beginning of our era is its union with work of the mind, the cultivation of knowledge. Partly because of their esteem for manual labor and also partly because their teaching was gratuitous, a great number of doctors of the Law combined the two kinds of occupation. The Talmud mentions more than a hundred rabbis who, at certain hours, became workmen. Among them are designated shoemakers, tailors, curriers, blacksmiths, potters, embroiderers, bricklayers, needle-makers, and coopers. In the presence of these facts, we better understand that St. Paul learned in boyhood to manufacture cloth for tents;[445] and it is with some pride

[445] Acts 18:3.

that he recalls the noble independence he was able to enjoy, thanks to the labor of his hands, while so assiduously preaching the Gospel.[446] Such, too, was the conduct of the Divine Master, who willed to exercise the carpenter's trade during a long part of His hidden life, under the direction of His foster-father.[447]

The Jews' love for manual labor did not prevent them, in Our Lord's time, from clearly manifesting those business traits which they have since developed to so high a degree. It is useless for Josephus to affirm that his compatriots had "no taste for business and for the consequent dealing with strangers";[448] for he several times flatly contradicts this when he speaks of Jews who in Palestine or elsewhere became rich through clever business dealings. Nor should we place too much reliance on the following assertion of a certain rabbi, named Johanan: "Wisdom . . . is not across the sea; that is, you do not find it among business people and traveling merchants."[449] In fact, we can adduce, in opposition to Johanan, these words of another Jewish doctor: "There is no occupation worse than farming; commerce is worth all the harvests in the world."[450]

It was precisely at the time of Christ that the business aptitude of the Israelites began to show itself. Josephus points to several princes of the family of Herod, and even to some priests, who had embarked in business on a large scale. St. Luke shows us "a certain nobleman" who trafficked through the intermediary of his servants.[451] If in some Israelitic centers there was a feeling of repugnance for commerce, that was, to some extent, because of the necessary relations that it

[446] 2 Thess. 3:8.
[447] Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3.
[448] *Contra Apion.*, I, 12.
[449] Erubhin, 55, a.
[450] Yebhamoth, 63, 1, see Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 309–312, 318, 320–324, 333–336.
[451] Luke 19:12–27.

created with pagans, when undertaken on a large scale; then, too, it held out snares for moral honesty.[452] Palestine being by its geographical situation a place of transit between the East and the West, it was hardly possible or profitable for its inhabitants to abandon to the pagans the care of commercial undertakings. Moreover, national commerce had to be kept up, markets and bazaars provisioned, exchanges made with foreign manufactures, etc. It is not, then, surprising that the Gospels incidentally mention such and such a local trade: among others, that in oil (*Matt.* 25:9), pearls (*Matt.* 13:45 f.), cattle (*Luke* 14:19), cloth (*Mark* 15:46; *Luke* 22:36), arms (*Luke* 22:36), and perfumes (*Mark* 16:1; *John* 19:39).

In every country, domestic and foreign commerce as also countless other reasons necessitate traveling and this, to be done conveniently, calls for well laid out lines of communication. At the period of which we are speaking, Palestine had, thanks to the Herods and the Romans, a rather well kept system of roads. Josephus' writings and other ancient documents acquaint us with the chief of these arteries, which between them connected not only the principal localities of the country, but also Palestine and the neighboring nations. With the data gathered from the geographers and historians of that period, the learned Palestinologist Reland († 1718) [453] made a map all crisscrossed with roads. The chief ones went as follows: (1) from Jerusalem: south to Bethlehem and Hebron; southwest to Gaza; west to Jaffa; east to Jericho and the Jordan, and thence into Peraea; north into Samaria and Galilee; (2) from Egypt, along the whole maritime plain, to Ptolemais and from there, across the plain to Esdraelon, to the Jordan, Lake Tiberias, thence to Damascus, reaching the Basan plateau; this was the most ancient highway of all Palestine; (3)

[452] The parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–9) is a striking example.
[453] *Palaestina ex Veteribus Monumentis Illustrata,* 1714.

from Caesarea Philippi by way of Mageddo to Scythopolis. Secondary roads branched off from the principal routes in every direction. Some of them were military roads, carefully maintained by the Romans, others were commercial or simply communicating roads. Those leading to Jerusalem were, of course, particularly frequented.

We shall have occasion to follow the steps of the Holy Family, then of our Savior and His disciples, over many parts of this well laid out network of roads. With the exception of a few districts of ill repute and rightly dreaded,[454] one could traverse the whole extent of Palestine in perfect safety. Traveling was generally on foot, though also frequently on the back of an ass or mule, sometimes in a chariot.[455] Inns, properly so called, were rare;[456] but in most cities and in villages of some importance, the traveler would find a khan or caravansary,[457] furnishing at least the shelter of a roof. But everywhere hospitality, that distinguishing virtue of the Biblical East and more specifically of Palestine, greatly facilitated traveling and made it pleasant. The Jews practiced it both from a sense of fraternity and from a spirit of religion, for the rabbis, in accord with certain illustrious Old Testament examples, often told them that to show hospitality to a fellow-Jew was as meritorious as though one were to receive God Himself. So Christ, when sending out His Apostles to preach for the first time, supposes, as something beyond question, that generally they will only have to present themselves to be well received.[458] Travelers vie with one another in repeating that the Palestinian Arabs, in this matter, continue the practice of the Israelites of old. Sometimes they even quarrel

[454] The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was one of the most dangerous; cfr. Luke 10:30.

[455] Acts 8:28–31.

[456] Luke 10:7.

[457] Luke 2:7.

[458] Matt. 10:11–42, etc.

among themselves for the honor of lodging strangers who stop in their village. They offer the best they have, and the traveler does not always succeed in making them accept remuneration.

From what we have previously noted on the fertility of Palestine's soil and the multiplicity of its agricultural products, as also on the commercial and other activities of its population, it follows that under ordinary conditions the cost of living was very moderate. This seems the truer as most of the population had quite simple tastes in the matter of dress and food. Besides, several circumstances mentioned by the sacred writers [459] plainly confirm this conclusion. In France the centime has almost entirely disappeared from circulation as a coin because it is no longer of any use in making purchases. On the contrary, there existed among the Jews a very small coin, called *perutah,* which was worth only one-sixteenth of a French sou or American cent; but purchases could be made with it. Moreover, the pay of a laborer who had worked a whole day in a vineyard was only one *denarius,* that is, about 17 cents.[460] The good Samaritan, on leaving the inn where he had brought the traveler wounded by robbers, handed the innkeeper only two *denarii* for the further care to be given the injured guest.[461] Lastly in the Palestine markets, two sparrows sold for an *as,* or about one cent, and five could be bought for two *asses.*[462] From these examples, taken at random, it follows that living was not very expensive in Palestine in Our Lord's time.[463]

In spite of the relatively more or less prosperous condition of Palestine as a whole, as we have just described it, wretchedness, and sometimes destitution, found their way into more

[459] Besides Josephus and the Talmud.
[460] Matt. 20:2.
[461] Luke 10:35.
[462] Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6.
[463] Schwalm, *op. cit.,* pp. 338–346.

than one part of the country. In the long ago, Moses, describing the fertility of the land of Chanaan, was able to say that it was "a land of wheat and barley and vineyards, wherein fig trees and pomegranates and olive yards grow: a land of oil and honey, where without any want thou shalt eat thy bread and enjoy abundance of all things." [464] This picture, correct as well as ideal, did not mean that the theocratic nation had only to settle on the soil of the Holy Land in order that all its members should be forever free from the risk of poverty. The invasions and wars that followed one another for a long time, the deportation of most of the inhabitants, the bondage of the others during the Chaldean, Persian, and Greek periods, then, just before the Christian era, the internal rivalries of factions and dynasties, had considerably impoverished the country and produced a great deal of suffering among the lower classes. Hunger came to be felt in more than one home,[465] and the Psalmist could not have said, as formerly he had, that he saw no just man seeking bread.[466] The anathema: "Woe to you that are rich!" [467] uttered by Our Lord against those who were enjoying their wealth in a selfish manner or had acquired it by unjust means, and the parable of the poor man Lazarus,[468] suppose abuses crying to Heaven for vengeance.[469]

In a large number of cases, one of the chief causes of poverty, independently of Oriental improvidence, is to be found in the very heavy taxes with which Palestine was burdened. Tacitus plainly points this out when he mentions that in the reign of Tiberius "the provinces of Syria and Judea, oppressed with impositions, prayed for an abatement of trib-

[464] Deut. 8:8 f.
[465] Luke 6:21.
[466] Ps. 36:25.
[467] Luke 6:24–26; cfr. James 5:1–6.
[468] Luke 16:19–31.
[469] Schwalm, *op. cit.*, pp. 554–556.

ute." [470] And from Josephus we know that, at the death of Herod the Great, the Jews presented an identic complaint to Archelaus. Everything was taxed to support the finances of the Jewish state and to pay the tribute exacted by Rome. Ingenious zeal for the public treasury led to the introduction of direct and indirect taxes, personal taxes and land taxes, customs duties and tolls, the former collected at the frontiers, the latter at the ports, crossroads, highways, bridges, and entrances of cities. No one escaped.[471]

In themselves these taxes were crushing. But they were made still more unbearable by the way they were collected. The state, instead of collecting them through government officials, at public expense and under public control, farmed them out to rich men, or sometimes to corporations, who levied them at their own risk through subordinate agents. To be more certain of recuperating the large amounts which they had to advance, they demanded from the taxable persons amounts much higher than those established by law. In this they often made scandalous fortunes. Their subagents, whose official Latin title was *portitores,* imitated these sorry examples only too well and in turn did not fail to fix surtaxes which were their private windfall. Their rapacity was proverbial. "All publicans are robbers," went the saying. Cicero does not hesitate to say that the profession of publican was the worst of all.[472] Practically there was almost no effective redress against their vexatious measures because, in the provinces especially, the Roman authorities, instead of suppressing such crying abuses, were often in connivance with the publicans to despoil the public.[473] When they were Jews who filled this

[470] *Annales,* II, 42.

[471] See J. Marquardt, *De l'Organisation Financière chez les Romains,* French transl. of Part X of Mommsen and Marquardt, *Manuel des Antiquités Romaines,* 1888, pp. 229–232.

[472] *De Officiis,* I, 42.

[473] Tacitus, *Annales,* XIII, 50.

sorry office and particularly when they had to levy on their brethren the tribute destined for Rome, they became an object of even greater contempt, as we see from several passages in the Gospels, where they are classed with the worst sinners.[474]

These heavy taxes, in addition to other accidental causes, gradually ended, for a certain number of the inhabitants of Palestine, not only in poverty, but in real pauperism. The Mosaic Law decreed very prudent and humane measures to remove this plague, or at least to diminish it.[475] Unfortunately those provisions had long since fallen into desuetude. There were, it is true, in the time of Christ some generous persons who gave alms to the poor with an open hand; but there was no organization, whether public or private, to relieve the wretchedness on a large scale. The Messias, however, was about to come, and the prophets had announced that zeal in preaching the Gospel to the poor, in helping and comforting them, would be one of His most beautiful traits.[476]

It was only too easy to note, in the Palestine of that same period, other physical miseries no less hideous, in the form of diseases of all sorts. In connection with Our Lord's miracles, the Evangelists supply a sadly eloquent list of the sick who came to Him to be cured. They point out, among others, cases of fever, leprosy, total or partial paralysis, epilepsy, hemorrhage, blindness, deafness, dumbness, wounds inflicted by sharp instruments. But they by no means enumerate all the physical ills from which Our Lord's countrymen suffered. Ailments of the same sort and many others besides are no less absent in Palestine to-day than they were eighteen centuries ago. There, as throughout Syria and the rest of the Biblical East, "when affliction is hard, it is frightful: on all sides you meet beggars, the lame, the crippled, the blind, lepers, unfortunate wrecks

[474] Matt. 9:10 f.; 11:19; 18:17; 21:30 f.; Mark 2:15 f.; Luke 5:30; 7:20–30; 15:1; 19:2.

[475] See Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Vol. IV, col. 2234 f.

[476] Is. 61:1; Ps. 71:12–14; cfr. Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22.

of humanity deprived of health. In the absence of good care, those whose constitution is too frail cannot resist and quickly perish in the struggle for existence; the others live as best they can." [477] At the present time, however, Christian charity, coming from Europe and even distant America, has established, in the chief cities and in various country places, hospitals and clinics which greatly alleviate the suffering. But there was nothing of the sort at the beginning of the first century. Among the poor, therefore, most of the sick and infirm suffered and died under distressing conditions.

It is true that the country counted a certain number of physicians. Nevertheless, what rabbinical literature tells us about the medical practice of the times shows that the physicians were mostly common charlatans. St. Mark's severe strictures in the matter were all too well justified by the facts. He speaks of "a woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing the better, but rather worse." [478] The effective practice of medicine is not possible without an intimate knowledge of the human body. But anatomy was absolutely forbidden to Jewish physicians, since contact with a corpse created a case of legal impurity. So it happened that the remedies which they prescribed for their patients were generally powerless as a cure, when they did not aggravate the disease.[479] Frequently, too, they were tainted with superstition. This being so, we can understand the malicious remark in the Talmud: "The very best physician is doomed to hell"; [480] and we can especially realize the increase of suffering which their ignorance and unskilfulness produced.

Before speaking of the relations between our Savior's coun-

[477] Lortet, *La Syrie d'Aujourd'hui,* 1884, p. 369.
[478] Mark 5:25 f; cfr. Luke 8:43.
[479] Fillion, *L'Évangile selon Saint Marc,* p. 43.
[480] Kiddushin, 4:14; cfr. S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie,* I, 229–267.

trymen and the pagans, let us bear in mind that the population of Palestine, at the period we are considering, was in great majority Jewish. The writings of the historian Josephus leave no doubt about it. As a result of the efforts of the Hasmonean rulers, especially Aristobulus I, it was not only in Judea, but in Galilee and Peraea as well, that the Israelitic element predominated. The contrary has occasionally been asserted, but wrongly so, as far as Galilee is concerned. In fact, the Gospels confirm the statements of Josephus by showing us, in all the places of that province visited by Our Lord, synagogues where the Jews met for worship. Moreover, if such a Jewish majority did not then exist, it would be impossible to understand the ease and readiness with which all Galilee rose up against the Romans a few years after Christ's death. As to the northeastern districts—Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Ituraea—they had a mixed population, made up of Syrians, Jews, and Hellenists.[481] We have spoken above [482] of the composition of the population of Samaria. There, too, a certain number of Israelites had settled.

From this summary we see that in many places in Palestine the Jews had to guard against pagan influences, which they had allowed to encroach upon them too much, to their great hurt, at various epochs in their history. To aid them in this matter, their religious leaders had, to use the accepted term, "hedged" about the law, by prohibitions and interdictions of all sorts, which were an additional burden on the life of the individual. If the sole purpose of these new regulations had been to keep the theocratic nation from all real connivance with idolatry, they would have been praiseworthy. But, as on so many other points, the Scribes fell into exaggeration by their subtle and ofttimes ridiculous casuistry. Thus, for instance, on the simple supposition that the wine of a pagan might

[481] Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, III, iii, 5.

[482] Pages 103 sq.

have been used for libations in honor of false gods, every Jew was forbidden to drink any of it and, furthermore, to buy it for the purpose of selling it again. The desire to maintain legal purity led still further. In principle, all Gentiles were unclean and communicated their uncleanness to others.[483] For this reason the Jews were strictly forbidden to enter their houses; whoever did so, contracted a legal defilement.[484] With greater reason, therefore, must one abstain from eating with them.[485] A kitchen utensil, a knife which they had used, had to undergo a special purification. All this became a perpetual annoyance to any Israelite who, living among Gentiles, wanted to remain faithful to the regulations laid down by the doctors of the law. Josephus relates [486] that several priests, friends of his, who were led captive to Rome, took no food but figs and nuts, so as not to disregard the traditions of their fathers. The Jews were also forbidden to rent their houses or even their fields to pagans.[487]

A spirit of religious zeal had already led the Jews of Palestine to detest the Gentiles. It was, therefore, very painful for them to see pagans settling, occasionally as masters, on that soil which God had in olden times given to Israel as a sacred possession. The inconveniences resulting from the strict regulations that we have just spoken of, were not likely to lessen that antipathy. And with what hateful gratification did the Jews shake the dust from their sandals whenever they were leaving pagan territory, to tread again the soil of Palestine! On the other hand, these same rules were not calculated to make the children of Israel more likable in the eyes of the Gentiles. Their secluded life, their haughtiness, their pride, the disdain which they so often displayed toward anyone who was

[483] Acts 10:28.
[484] John 18:28.
[485] Acts 11:3; Gal. 2:12.
[486] *Vita*, 3.
[487] Cfr. Weber, *System der altsynagog. palästinischen Theologie*, pp. 58 f.

alien to their race, were not slow in making enemies and rivals for them as they themselves complain in the so-called Sibylline Books.[488] Enmity engendered insults, then countless hateful accusations, which are voiced in the writings of several great Roman authors.[489] The Alexandrian grammarian Apion made a collection of them, which he published in his history of Egypt. This book has been lost, but its contents are known to us through the refutation that Josephus composed in a special work.[490] Among other things, it was charged that the Jews adored an ass's head; fun was made of their practice of circumcision, their abhorrence of pork, etc.

One day, in the presence of the Jews of Jerusalem, Our Lord uttered these enigmatic words: "You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither you cannot come." His hearers in surprise said one to another: "Whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" [491] At that period, the Jews were not all gathered together in Palestine. A very considerable part of the nation was scattered over most of the lands that formed the Roman Empire. These were designated by the Greek word *Diaspora,* "Dispersion." [492] The following passage from the Acts of the Apostles, without exhausting the list, enumerates a number of foreign countries where the Jews had settled at the time of the first Christian Pentecost: "Parthians and Medes and Elamites and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." [493]

This "Dispersion" was inaugurated by the violence of the conquering Assyrians and Chaldeans, who deported a large

[488] III, 272.
[489] Cfr. Tacitus, *Hist.,* V, 2–10; Cicero, *Pro Flacco,* 28; Juvenal, *Satyrae,* II, 14.
[490] It is entitled, *Contra Apionem.*
[491] John 7:34 f.
[492] John 7:35; James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1, in the Greek text.
[493] Acts 2:9–11.

number of Israelites to the distant East and drove others to Egypt.[494] It was further increased by various causes, not the least of which was a desire to engage in profitable commerce abroad. The fact is that at the beginning of Christianity Jews were to be found nearly everywhere. St. Paul met more or less considerable groups of them in all the cities where he went to preach the Gospel: on the island of Cyprus, at Antioch of Pisidia,[495] at Iconium and Lystra,[496] at Philippi and Thessalonica,[497] at Athens and Corinth,[498] at Rome.[499] It was a providential fact that remarkably facilitated the spread of Christian truth. The Jews could boast of filling every land [500] and the geographer Strabo confirms this when he writes: "It is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them." [501] These last words mean that the Jews were making themselves at home everywhere.

However, these members of the "Dispersion" constantly turned their eyes toward Palestine, more especially toward Jerusalem, as toward their religious center, to which they returned from time to time on the occasion of the great solemnities. Nor did they fail to pay every year the tax of a half-shekel,[502] which was intended to meet part of the expenses of the sanctuary.[503] The amounts collected in each locality were gathered together at certain centers and sent to the Holy City by special delegates.

[494] 4 Kings 25:25 f.; Jer. 41:17–44; 30.
[495] Acts 13:5, 14.
[496] Acts 14:1, 18; 16:1.
[497] Acts 16:12; 17:1.
[498] Acts 17:16 f.; 18:1 f.
[499] Acts 28:17–29.
[500] Sibylline Books, III, 271; cfr. Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, II, xvi, 4; F. de Champagny, *Rome et la Judée*, 1865, I, 107–154.
[501] Quoted by Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, vii, 2.
[502] A *shekel* was a silver coin worth about fifty-six cents.
[503] Ex. 30:11–16; Matt. 17:26; Philo, *De Monarchia*, II, 3; Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, ix, 1.

Notwithstanding the prejudices, usually unjust, which the pagans cherished with regard to the Jewish race, many of them in time became impressed by the spirituality and beauty of the Mosaic religion as also by the brotherly union and upright life of most of its members. Impelled by this esteem, some even became converted to Judaism.[504] They were called "proselytes." [505] Their conversion might take place in one of two ways. When it was absolute and entire, the new member had to receive circumcision and obey all the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law.[506] In that case, it conferred on him privileges almost equal to those enjoyed by one who was a Jew by birth. More often it consisted merely in believing in the God of Israel, renouncing idolatrous practices, refraining from impurity, theft, murder, and the eating of animals that had been strangled. Proselytes of this second class were the more numerous. The Acts of the Apostles [507] and Josephus [508] tell us that women often gave up paganism and submitted, more or less strictly, to the Jewish Law. The Pharisees and their disciples showed a zeal, more ardent than prudent, in making proselytes,[509] as our Lord reproached them.[510] Some of these converts led a life so far removed from perfection that the Talmud says they helped to delay the coming of the Messias.[511]

A question of the highest importance, with regard to the social relations of the Jews in Christ's time, is that of the languages spoken in Palestine. Various facts conclusively prove the popular idiom to have been Aramaic. In the first place, it is certain that, when Christ came into the world, Hebrew

[504] Horace, *Sat.*, I, iv, 138–143, and Juvenal, *Sat.*, XIV, 96–106, allude to this.

[505] A word of Greek origin, meaning "strangers," but in the special sense of strangers who pass over to the service of the true God.

[506] Cfr. Gal. 5:3.

[507] Acts 13:50; 16:14; 17:4.

[508] *Bell. Iud.*, II, xx, 2.

[509] Josephus, *Vita*, 33; *Ant.*, XIII, ix; XI, iii; XV, iv, etc.

[510] Matt. 23:15.

[511] Niddah, 13, 2.

had for several centuries become a dead language for almost the totality of Jews, so much so that even in Palestine it was necessary to translate into the new speech of the country the passages of the Pentateuch and the Prophets which formed part of the public worship. It was the wholesale deportation of Israelites to Chaldea that occasioned this substitution of one language for the other. In fact, Aramaic was spoken not only in the country of Aram, or Syria, as its name indicates, but also in Chaldea, and it was there that the Jewish exiles had to use it in order to be understood by the inhabitants. Thus little by little they unlearned their own tongue. This transformation was the easier for them, inasmuch as there is a considerable resemblance between Hebrew and Aramaic.[512] On returning to Palestine, the exiles brought this other speech with them, and it became the general language of the country. Thenceforth Hebrew was scarcely known except by the doctors of the law and their disciples, who learned it as a duty so as to understand and expound the Bible and who readily used it in their discussions on the sacred texts.

Another fact, no less characteristic, shows beyond a doubt that Aramaic was the language of Christ, of His disciples, and of His compatriots. This fact is the presence in the various books of the New Testament of expressions that indubitably belong to that tongue. The words *raca, mammon, corban, pascha, Golgotha, Eli Eli lamma sabacthani, talitha cumi, ephpheta, abba, Gabbatha, Haceldama, Maranatha,* the names *Kepha* (Cephas), *Martha, Tabitha,* and still others, such as *Barabbas, Bartholomew, Barjesus, Barjonas, Barnabas, Bartimeus,* cannot deny their Aramaic origin. They clearly show the language that was spoken in Palestine at the time when the writings that contain them were published.

But we have evidence still more explicit. St. Peter, in his

[512] They both belong to the family of languages called Semitic.

discourse in the upper room at Jerusalem, quotes the word *Haceldama,* which means "field of blood," and adds that it belongs to the language of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.[513] In the Acts of the Apostles [514] it is related that St. Paul, addressing the Jews in the court of the Temple, spoke to them "in Hebrew"; a general expression which in this passage certainly signifies Aramaic, since at that time Hebrew was a dead language, as we said above.[515] Josephus expressly declares [516] that he first wrote his book on the Jewish War "in the language of our own country," before translating it into Greek, which, he says elsewhere, he learned with much difficulty.[517]

In the districts of Palestine where there was a more or less considerable pagan population, especially at various places in Galilee, Greek was the language of the foreigners and was also spoken by a certain number of Jews. But this case was exceptional and was severely criticized by the rabbis. It is, therefore, beyond doubt, notwithstanding some assertions to the contrary, that Aramaic has the honor of being the tongue which the Infant Savior lisped to His mother and His foster-father, the language in which He uttered His sublime prayers, the language in which He preached the Gospel and delivered His wonderful discourses.[518]

[513] Acts 1: 19. The noun *Haceldama* is not Hebrew, but Aramaic.

[514] Acts 22: 2.

[515] The same is true of the passage in Acts 26: 14.

[516] *Bell. Iud.,* preface.

[517] *Ant.,* preface.

[518] In recent years Aramaic has been a subject of extensive study. See A. Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache, das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesu und der Evangelien,* 1896; G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch,* 1894; Idem, *Aramäische Dialektproben, Lesestücke zur Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch,* 1896; Idem, *Aramäisches Neuhebräisches Wörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud, und Midrasch,* 1897; Idem, *Die Worte Jesu, mit Berücksichtigung des nachkanonischen jüdischen Schrifttums und der aramäischen Sprache erörtert,* 1898; Schultze, *Grammatik der aramäischen Muttersprache Jesu,* 1899, and F. Vigouroux, *Le Nouveau Testament et les Découvertes Archéologiques Modernes,* 2d ed., 1896, pp. 9–57.

III. Religious Conditions of the Jews in the Time of Our Lord

These are naturally of the first importance for us; and their study is of particular interest. Thanks to the Gospels and the other Books of the New Testament, as also to the rabbinical writings and those of the historian Josephus, they are relatively easy to reconstruct.

I. We will first speak of the public worship, properly so called, and will group what appear to us as the most useful details under three principal headings: the place, the personnel, and the ceremonies of worship.

1. Unity of sanctuary had been from the beginning a principle of the religion of Israel, the better to express the oneness of the true God. The portable tabernacle, after accompanying the Hebrews in their wanderings through the desert, was located successively at Shilo, Nob, and Gabaon. It was succeeded by the magnificent Temple that Solomon built at Jerusalem on Mount Moria, but which was ruthlessly destroyed by the soldiers of Nabuchodonosor. When the exile was ended, Zorobabel and the Jews who came back from Chaldea strove to bring that glorious sanctuary forth from its ruins. But the building they erected on its site, amidst every sort of difficulty, was so unassuming that the sight of it brought bitter tears to the eyes of such of the exiles as had beheld the former Temple.[519] King Herod the Great, whose tireless architectural ardor we have mentioned, had an ambition to enlarge and adorn this second Temple in such wise as to make it equal Solomon's in beauty. He began its construction the eighteenth year of his reign (20–19 B. C.) and at first the work advanced very rapidly. But in its *ensemble* it formed so gigantic a mass that it could be completed only long after his death, in the administration of the Roman governor Albinus (A. D. 62–64).

[519] Esdras 3: 12.

This fact explains how the Jews were able to say to the Savior, about the beginning of His public life, that it was forty-six years in building.[520]

Thanks in particular to Josephus and his detailed description of this edifice, which he had seen with his own eyes,[521] we can form a fairly accurate idea of it. In its whole, according to the testimony of competent judges, it formed "one of the most splendid architectural combinations of the ancient world." Its richness and beauty were proverbial. "Whoever has not seen Herod's temple," they said, "has never seen a sumptuous building." The site was admirable and exceedingly picturesque, above the Cedron valley, opposite the Mount of Olives. At the rear was the city, built like an amphitheater on the nearby hills; there were the far-stretching terraces, one higher than the other, and surrounded by galleries or courts with a thousand columns; and structures of various forms, elegantly grouped, covered with marbles and precious metals: the whole uniting to form a harmonious mass, which the eye never tired gazing upon.

This whole collection of courts and buildings the Gospels [522] habitually designate by the Greek name of *hileron* (ἱερον); *naos* (νάος) is nearly always reserved for the sanctuary proper.

We must now speak of the *terraces,* placed one higher than the other. They were to the number of three. The lowest, which was likewise much the largest, occupied the whole space of what is now called *Haram ash-Sherif,* "the sacred enclosure," which embraces the Mosque of Omar, the El-Aksa mosque, and the surrounding courts. The necessary preparations for the construction of this terrace required a large expenditure of money and labor. The ground had to be leveled;

[520] John 2: 20.

[521] *Bell. Iud.,* V, 5; *Ant.,* XV, xi. The Talmud tractate Middoth also supplies some information. In the New Testament we find only a few brief scattered indications on this subject.

[522] About fifty times.

immense vaulted substructures, strengthened with firm pillars,[523] had to be built in the southern part. All around this quadrilateral there rose a wall which, according to Josephus, measured two stadia in length by one in width.[524] This enclosure was called the outer court, or Court of the Gentiles. It communicated with the city by several gates, the principal ones being on the west. There were also two on the south side, one on the north, and one on the east. Of the four west gates, one opened on a bridge, the beauty of which can still be discerned at the southwest corner; it crossed the Tyropeon, which is now obstructed for the most part.

As its name indicates, the Court of the Gentiles was accessible to pagans. It surrounded the *naos* on all sides, but not in equal proportions. On the eastern side, and especially on the southern, it reached its largest dimensions. The whole length of its enclosure wall there ran rich porticoes, covered with cedar wood and adorned on the south, north, and west sides by two rows of white marble monolithic columns. The eastern gallery, called Solomon's Porch,[525] had four rows. The whole court was paved with stones of different colors. At the northwest corner there towered the enormous citadel, then called Antonia. It had been built by the Hasmonean princes. A stairway placed it in communication with the Court of the Gentiles.[526]

The second terrace, or inner court, with its three distinct enclosed spaces and its various structures, formed a rectangle, about 230 feet long and 130 feet wide. Taken as a whole, its level was fifteen cubits[527] higher than that of the Court of the Gentiles. It rose, not in the center of this latter, but in the northwest portion. It, too, was encompassed by a wall. Against

[523] There is question as to the date of these still much admired pillars under the El-Aksa mosque.

[524] The Olympic *stadium* is equal to about 607 feet.

[525] John 10:23; Acts 3:11; 5:12.

[526] Acts 21:35, 40.

[527] The *cubit* was equal to about 20 inches.

this wall, on its inner side, rooms were constructed, storerooms for the use of the priests and for various objects connected with the ceremonies of worship. This wall had nine gates, four on the north side, the same number on the south, and one on the east. To reach the north or south gates, one had first to mount a flight of fourteen steps, surmounted by a landing ten cubits wide. This landing surrounded a balustrade having at certain intervals Greek and Latin inscriptions which forbade, under pain of death, any pagan to go farther.[528] The east gate was especially remarkable. This is very likely the one mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the Beautiful Gate.[529] It was fifty-six cubits high and forty wide, and was made entirely of bronze. It led directly to the women's court, so named, not because it was exclusively reserved for them, but because they were permitted to enter that far. Its level was somewhat lower than that of the Court of Israel and the Priests' Court, to which access was had by a flight of several steps and a portico—the gate of Nicanor—still richer than the Beautiful Gate.

The Court of Israel was comparatively narrow, for its width did not exceed eleven cubits; but it seems to have entirely encircled the upper terrace which contained the sanctuary. All Israelites (*i. e.,* the men) could enter it. Beyond this space and enclosed by it was the court reserved for the priests and Levites, in the midst of which was set up the enormous altar of holocausts, intended to receive and consume the flesh of the victims daily immolated.

The sanctuary proper, or *naos,* seems to have occupied the present site of the Mosque of Omar. It was reached from the Priests' Court by a flight of twelve steps that led to the upper esplanade, on which it was built. Its dimensions were compara-

[528] One of these inscriptions was discovered not long ago. Cfr. Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible,* pl. XCVIII, fig. 2.

[529] Acts 3:2.

tively small, for it was not intended, like our churches, for religious gatherings or for great displays of public worship. It served chiefly to represent the palace, and consequently the presence of the God of Israel in the midst of His chosen people. In front of it, after the fashion of Egyptian temples, was a lofty portico, magnificently adorned, dominating the entire group of structures, and producing a splendid effect. Beneath this porch was a vestibule, by which one entered a room, forty cubits long by twenty cubits wide, which was called the Holy Place. Here might be seen the small golden altar, on which a little incense was burned morning and evening, the seven-branched golden candlestick, and the table of shew bread, or loaves of proposition. At the far side of the sanctuary was the Holy of Holies, a square room, only twenty cubits on a side. At an earlier period the Ark of the Covenant occupied this place. Alone and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, did the High Priest have the right to enter the Holy of Holies, where he offered a brief prayer for the people.

In spite of its brevity and dryness, this description will give the reader, we hope, some notion of the splendor of the Temple at Jerusalem in the time of our Lord. The Roman historian Tacitus boasts of its "immense wealth." [530] Josephus cannot find fitting words to express the enthusiasm he felt in the presence of this wonder. In closing his description, he says: "The outward face of the Temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes: for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. But this Temple appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow;

[530] *Hist.*, V, 8.

for, as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white," [531] because of the blocks of marble of which they were constructed.

But for all true Israelites its dignity far surpassed its magnificence. They regarded it—and justly so—as the holiest place in the world, as the palace of the great King, as the religious center of the chosen people. So the doctors of the Law expressly forbade anyone to enter the inner courts with a staff in his hand, with shoes on his feet, or with a purse at his belt.[532] Christ decided in their favor when He protested, for His own part, against the profanations that were daily committed there. Hence, too, came the indignation shown by the Jews against the Divine Master when, in figurative language, He one day alluded to the possibility of its destruction.[533] Hence came especially the keen grief which they felt when the Romans set fire to it and destroyed it.[534] That grief still endures and it is not without being moved that the Christian pilgrim sees in Jerusalem, at the "Wall of Wailing,"—an old wall built of gigantic stones that must have formed part of the foundation walls of the Temple—Jewish men and women, standing, kneeling, or squatting, reciting sorrowful lamentations, striking their breasts, and pouring forth bitter tears at the thought of the ruin of the splendid edifice that was a symbol of their religious and political life.[535]

Our Blessed Lord, in conformity with what the prophet

[531] *Bell. Iud.*, V, v, 6.

[532] Berakhoth, IX, 5.

[533] John 2:19; Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:58.

[534] Cf. De Champagny, *Les Derniers Jours de Jérusalem*, 1866, pp. 346–382.

[535] On Herod's Temple, see de Vogué, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, 1864; Edersheim, *The Temple, its Ministry and its Services*, 1874; Hildersheim, *Die Beschreibung des Herodischen Tempels im Tractate Middoth und in Flavius Josephus*, 1876–1877; Warren and Conder, *Survey of Western Palestine: Jerusalem*, 1884, pp. 117–341; Schick, *Der Tempel in Jerusalem und der Tempelplatz der Jetztzeit*, 1896, and articles on this subject in biblical archæologies and dictionaries of the Bible (especially in that of Vigouroux, Vol. V, cols. 2024–2078).

Aggeus foretold,[536] often honored Herod's Temple with His presence. He was carried there forty days after His birth;[537] at the age of twelve He accompanied His mother and foster-father there.[538] He often made it the place of His teaching, during His public life[539] and in the last days of His earthly career.[540] Twice He drove out from it the sellers who scandalously profaned its courts.[541] On Palm Sunday He was solemnly escorted thither as the Messias by His disciples and a numerous throng.[542] For all these reasons the Temple occupied a large place in His earthly life.

The synagogues also were frequently the scenes of Christ's miracles and preaching. They were not intended for use as places of public worship, strictly so called, which consisted chiefly of sacrifices that could be offered only in the Temple. They served, as their name indicates, as places for the religious "gatherings" of the Jews, who used to meet there on certain days to offer up prayers to God and to receive from their doctors the authorized interpretation of the divine Law.[543] It is a remarkable fact that the words "synagogue" and "church," which for eighteen centuries have stood for diametrically opposite institutions, have really the same meaning, since their primary sense is "assembly"[544] or "meeting place." Little is known of the origin of synagogues; but they

[536] Aggeus 2:7–10.

[537] Luke 2:22–27.

[538] Luke 2:41–50.

[539] John 5:14–47; 7:14–53; 8:1–59; 10:22–39.

[540] Matt. 21:23—24:1, etc.

[541] John 2:13–22; Matt. 21:12–17, etc.

[542] Matt. 21:1–12; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–45.

[543] Philo, *Vita Mosis*, I, 27, and Josephus, *Contra Apion.*, II, 17, insist on this secondary purpose of the synagogues, presenting it as the chief one. The Evangelists confirm this view, for again and again they show us our Lord teaching in the synagogues of Palestine; cfr. Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:15, 31; 13:10; John 6:60; 18:20. St. Paul, too, at every opportunity, preached the Gospel in the synagogues; cfr. Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 18:4.

[544] Συναγώγη, from συν and ἄγω; ἐκκλησία from ἐκ and καλέω.

were considered as very ancient.[545] Often they were also called προσευχή, "prayer," or προσευκτήριον, "place of prayer." [546]

In Our Lord's time they were very numerous in Palestine, where the humblest village seems to have had its synagogue. Cities and towns ordinarily possessed several. Philo certainly does not exaggerate when he speaks of a thousand synagogues in which the Mosaic Law was explained every Sabbath.[547] They were constructed as richly as the people's means allowed. The ruins of several of them, lately discovered in Galilee and dating, it is thought, from the first century of our era, are a credit to the artistic taste of their builders.

Those of Tell Hum, the ancient Capharnaum, in Graeco-Roman style, are particularly interesting, especially if, as has been supposed, they represent the synagogue built at the expense of the Roman centurion [548] whose servant Jesus cured. The interior formed a big, long room, occasionally divided into three naves, and so orientated that the people there assembled would be facing in the direction of Jerusalem. The furnishings were of the simplest: far at the back, a large cupboard in which the sacred parchment rolls were kept; in front of this cupboard, a rostrum for reader and preacher; lamps, benches, etc.

Meetings were held several times a week, especially on feast-days and on the Sabbath. The religious service consisted of some special prayers; of two readings, taken from the Pentateuch and the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament, respectively; of a sermon, usually connected with these sacred texts.[549] Each synagogue had its ruler, who presided at the

[545] Cfr. Acts 15:21.

[546] As does the Jewish writer Philo.

[547] The Talmud states that Jerusalem alone had 480 of them. This figure, however, is probably too high.

[548] Luke 7:5; cfr. Guérin, *Description de la Palestine: Galilée,* I, 198–201, 227–231, 241 f.; II, 93, 100 f., 447–449, etc.; E. Renan, *Mission de Phénicie,* 1869, pp. 761–783; Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible,* plates C and CI.

[549] Luke 4:16–30; Acts 13:14–41.

services and kept order,[550] its *hhazzan* or beadle,[551] and its treasurer. As we said above, these same buildings were, upon occasion, also used as schoolhouses and for other meetings of a dignified sort.[552]

2. A brief indication will suffice here as to the personnel of Jewish worship. It consisted of three categories: the High Priest, the priests, and the Levites, all of whom belonged to the family of Levi, with this difference, that the priests had to be descendants of Aaron, and the High Priest, at least at the beginning, had to be descended from the elder branch of that same family.

Regularly the high priesthood was a life office and was hereditary. But this rule underwent several modifications in the course of time. After the exile grave abuses arose from criminal ambitions and competitions.[553] At the time of Christ, Rome had degraded these sorry pontiffs into so many tools of its domination, and appointed them and removed them from office almost at pleasure. Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor, elevated and deposed three of them in a short interval. The High Priest represented in Israel the supreme authority in religious matters. To him belonged, by virtue of his office, the higher regulation of everything connected with public worship. His chief function he exercised on the day of the Great Pardon or Atonement, the tenth day of the month of Tisri.[554] On that day he entered the Holy of Holies, vested in white, and offered to God the blood of the expiatory victim to obtain pardon for the transgressions of the people.[555] At times he also

[550] Mark 5:22, 35 f., 38; Luke 8:41, 49; 13:14, etc.

[551] Luke 4:20.

[552] On the question of synagogues, see Vitringa's scholarly work, *De Synagoga Vetere Libri Tres*, 1696; F. Vigouroux, *Le Nouveau Testament et les Découvertes Modernes*, 2d ed., 1896, pp. 143–152; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, III, 4th ed., 427–463; H. Kohl and C. Watzinger, *Antike Synagogen in Galiläa*, 1916.

[553] Cfr. 2 Mach. 4:1–17.

[554] About the beginning of October.

[555] Lev. chap. 16; Ecclus. 50:1–24; Heb. 9:1–7.

officiated, dressed in rich and brilliant vestments, on the Sabbath and feast-days. The Gospels mention only two High Priests by name, Annas and Caiphas, both of whom, but especially the latter, played an infamous part in our Lord's Passion. Annas was appointed in the year six of our era, but was deposed after the death of Augustus (A. D. 14). Four of his sons, however, and his son-in-law Caiphas having succeeded him one after the other, he continued to wield considerable influence even after his deposition.[556] That is, no doubt, the reason why the Savior was led to him before being brought before the Sanhedrin for trial.[557]

David divided the priests into twenty-four classes.[558] That organization continued even to Our Lord's time.[559] Their essential duties consisted in burning a small amount of incense morning and evening on the little golden altar located in the Holy Place and in immolating the victims, placing their flesh on the altar of holocausts, and pouring out their blood at the foot of that same altar. It was also their duty to verify and declare the healing of lepers.[560]

The Levites were the priests' servers, assisting them in the sanctuary and at the altar. Their duties included also the sacred singing and the guarding and policing of the Holy Place. It was to a Levite that was entrusted the important post of "Officer of the Temple," [561] constituting him a high commissioner with authority to arrest and imprison whosoever should be lacking in respect to the sanctuary.

The priests and Levites dwelt in Jerusalem only during the week when they were performing their ministry, taking turns according to a prescribed order. Special cities were assigned

[556] Josephus, *Ant.*, XX, ix, 1.
[557] John 18:13; cfr. Luke 3:2.
[558] 1 Par. 24:7–19.
[559] Cfr. Luke 1:5.
[560] Lev. 13:1–59; Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14, etc.
[561] Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26; in Greek: ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ.

to them for their habitual residence.[562] Both priests and Levites received, as a means of subsistence, part of the flesh of the sacrificial victims and especially the tithe paid by all Israelites.

We have no need to enter into the details of the liturgical acts that formed the public worship of the Jews. We will simply recall that they consisted mainly of the offering of sacrifices and of prayer.

Of the sacrifices, some were bloody and some were unbloody. A little flour, raw or cooked, mixed with salt and accompanied by a libation of wine, formed the materials of the latter. It was of the very essence of the bloody sacrifice that a victim, which, according to rules minutely laid down, might be a bull, a cow, a calf, a sheep, a goat, a turtle-dove, or a pigeon, be immolated and its blood poured out at the foot of the altar. One of these sacrifices was not without a certain beauty: that offered every morning and evening in the name of the whole nation. A lamb without blemish, a cake made of flour and oil, and a libation of wine were its only expense.[563] The ceremony of the incense offering on the golden altar located in the Holy Place—that which was assigned by lot to Zacchary [564]—preceded this morning offering and concluded that of the evening.[565] We will describe it later on. Every day a great many victims were immolated in the name of private individuals, as thank offerings, as atonement for sins, to obtain special blessings from Heaven, in fulfilment of vows, etc.

The holocaust was distinguished from the other bloody sacrifices by its victim being entirely burned, no portion of it being reserved for the clergy or the donors. Evidently none of these offerings had any value in itself. What rendered them pleasing to God was, by anticipation, the only real sacrifice

[562] Josue 21:9–40; Luke 1:23, 39 f.
[563] Ex. 29:38–42; Num. 28:3–8.
[564] Luke 1:8–10.
[565] Philo, *De Victimis*, 3.

worthy of the sovereign Master, the immolation of the august Victim of Calvary, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, too, these imperfect oblations gradually disappeared under the New Covenant and gave place to the pure oblation which is daily offered throughout the world on thousands of Catholic altars.[566]

The Jews prayed, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling, with their hands extended heavenward. When they prayed, they fastened to their forehead and their left arm, by means of long leather straps, the "phylacteries," [567] that is, little parchment boxes containing strips, also of parchment, on which certain Biblical texts were written.[568] They likewise wore, at the four corners of their cloak, fringes, to which they attached a sacred character.[569] Christ conformed to this double practice, which still exists among the Jews of our own day.

II. In the Judaism of those days everything turned on the Mosaic legislation. It was truly the center of religious and moral life, the code of public and private law. "Matrimonial rights, the rights of parents with regard to their children, the judicial relations between masters and servants, the rights of creditors, the protection of life, the rights of authority, the regulation of expenditures, and even partly the right of war, the conduct of trials, the kind and degree of punishments, all that and much more besides had been regulated by the legislation of the Pentateuch. With remarkable tenacity the Old Law still dominated the practical organization of life, to a greater extent than one would have thought possible." [570] But as the decisions of the Mosaic Law no longer sufficed for the complications of the new way of living, it was necessary to develop and supplement them in a more or less artificial manner.

[566] Cfr. Mal. 1:11; Heb. 9:11–10:18.
[567] Matt. 23:5, etc.
[568] Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible,* pl. CIX, figs. 6, 7, 11.
[569] Matt. 9:20; Mark 5:27, etc.; Fillion, *op. cit.,* pl. CIX, figs. 2, 9, 10.
[570] W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums,* p. 102.

Those whose official mission it was, in Our Lord's time, to interpret the old legislation and adapt it to current needs, were highly honored personages, eagerly listened to by most of their coreligionists. The Evangelists often mention them, sometimes by their primitive title of "scribes," [571] sometimes by that of "lawyers" [572] or of "doctors of the Law." [573] At the beginning of the Christian era we see them formed into a compact, organized body; but there is some obscurity as to their origin. As the name "scribe" indicates, it would seem that at first they were simply charged with transcribing the sacred books that contained the authentic text of the Law, and with seeing to its perfect integrity. To this first function there was soon added another, much loftier, which consisted in explaining that same text in its smallest details, in such wise that everyone might thoroughly know the full extent of his duties.

It is some time after the close of the Babylonian Captivity that we perceive in Palestine the first traces of this institution, in the person of the celebrated Esdras—"Esdras the Scribe," as he is called several times.[574] But, while Esdras belonged to the priestly family to whose care the Sacred Books had theretofore been intrusted, the more recent Scribes were mostly laymen, instructed and full of zeal. Their legal studies made them partly theologians and partly legists. They dwelt in large numbers in Jerusalem and in Judea,[575] where their services were more especially needed. But they were to be found also in the other provinces of Palestine, notably in Galilee,[576] for nowhere could they be dispensed with. Nearly all of them were members of the sect of the Pharisees, of whom we will speak

[571] In Greek, *γραμματεῖς*. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew *soferim*.

[572] St. Luke frequently employs this title, *νομικοί*.

[573] In Greek, *νομοδιδάσκαλοι*. Josephus sometimes resorts to the periphrase, "interpreters of the laws of the fathers."

[574] Esdras 7:6, 11; Neh. 8:1, 4.

[575] Matt. 15:1; Mark 3:22.

[576] Luke 5:17.

presently.[577] That is why Our Lord joins their names in His terrible denunciations.[578] The Sadducees, however, had their doctors, too, who explained the law in a sense conformable to the special tendencies of their party.

A profound study of the Mosaic Law would naturally serve as a basis for the Scribes' interpretation of it. It is no more than just to say that for several generations they pursued that study in a most conscientious manner. Under the direct inspiration of God, Moses had set down, in broad lines, the principles that were to direct the social, moral, and religious conduct of the Israelites; but, with certain exceptions, he did not enter into details. The Scribes, therefore, took up these principles one by one and the regulations that occasionally accompanied them, in order to determine what they commanded or forbade in the most varied situations and to adapt them to the perpetually changing conditions of life. They imagined all possible cases and were ingenious in finding practical solutions for them, conformable to the spirit of the Law. Their decisions were handed down from mouth to mouth, and were put into writing only rather late, in the first centuries of the Christian era. They formed what was called "the tradition of the fathers." [579]

It was a whole collection of rules of conduct, extremely confused and complicated, reaching into interminable ramifications. In fact these subtle and meticulous casuists had hardly overlooked anything. When we realize that, in the application of the Mosaic law, they distinguished two hundred and forty-eight classes of positive precepts and three hundred and sixty-five negative ones, and that they had examined in minute detail each of these classes and its subdivisions, we can appreciate that their work, pursued for several centuries, was im-

[577] Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30.
[578] Matt. 23:2, 13, 14, 15, 25, 27, 29; Luke 11:39, 45, etc.
[579] Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:3.

mense. Such a work was the natural result of a legalism pushed to its utmost limit and of the desire to lay down for each one his duties in every possible circumstance.

We must briefly consider the moral aspect of this work that has given Judaism its special character, not only at the time of Christ, but even to our own day.[580] It is of prime importance that we should have a definite judgment in this matter because the whole religious life of that time was connected with it. Although our conclusion may be severe, it is no more so than was our Lord's judgment of the doctors of the Law and their traditions. We are far from condemning everything in the work of the Scribes. In itself, among a theocratic people, the close union of religion and law was not at all extraordinary; it was even quite in order, since the supreme Legislator as well as King was God, and He had a right to obedience as well as to worship, strictly so called. Under these conditions fidelity was rendered easier and its character, so noble in itself, necessarily became even more so.

Unfortunately such was not the case for most Jews of that time: and this fact was owing to the Scribes themselves. The reader must understand that they, much more than the priests, were the ones who directed the religious life of Israel. They sat "on the chair of Moses" [581] in their capacity of interpreters of the Law; they were, therefore, to be heard with respect and docility. As a matter of fact, they were encompassed with honor and esteem, but they took advantage of their position of authority to demand, in their own personal interest and particularly in the interest of their countless prescriptions, ever increasing regard. Not satisfied with being called *rabbi* or *rabboni,* "master," and with everywhere seeking the first

[580] The party of so-called liberal Jews, who decline to let themselves be guided by the "traditions" preserved in the Talmud, has been formed only lately. See C. G. Montefiore, *Outlines of Liberal Judaism,* 1912, and our article on this work in the *Revue Pratique d'Apologétique,* April, 1913, pp. 81–90.

[581] Matt. 23:2.

places,[582] they did not hesitate to place their "doctrines and precepts of men" [583] on a par with the commandments of God Himself. They even had the effrontery to claim that the former excelled the latter in worth. "The words of the Scribes," they said, "are more pleasing than those of the Law; among the sayings of the Law, some are important and others of slight account; all those of the Scribes are important." [584] Thence they deduced most astounding conclusions: for example, that there was nothing more creditable for an Israelite favored by fortune than to give his daughter in marriage to a doctor of the Law; [585] that in case a Jew should see his own father and a doctor in grave danger, it was the doctor whom he ought to rescue first.[586] Thus did fallible, imperfect men, often with ambitious designs, arrogate to themselves the right to supplement divine revelation and even to replace it by teachings that were partly false.

This odd amalgam of positive and negative precepts superadded to the original Law under the pretext of adapting the latter to actual circumstances, contributed not a little—and therein is another of its great defects—to impressing upon the Jewish religion of that epoch a narrow formalism, which, by the very multiplicity of its exactions, tended to blot out the principal aim, which was the generous and loyal service of God. Later on we will cite a number of the "traditions of the fathers," and it will be readily noted that, in general, they are of a shabby sort, often childish and even ridiculous. This web, in the meshes of which every individual was inextricably enfolded, stifled, deprived of almost all initiative, weighed down his soul instead of raising it up. The distressed conscience had

[582] Matt. 23:5–7; Mark 12:38 f.; Luke 20:46.

[583] Mark 7:7.

[584] Jerus. Talmud, Berakhoth, f. 3, 2.

[585] Pesachim, 49, a.

[586] See other similar sayings and examples in Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 4th ed., II, 312 f.

not a moment's truce. What must I do now? it asked itself after every act, for a new obligation was there waiting for it and pestering it. Long before had the prophet Joel cried out, in the Lord's name, against this artificial and withering formalism, saying: "Rend your hearts, and not your garments!" [587]

This pellmell of ceremonial, moral, and economic regulations, and others, too, constituting the work of the Scribes, was, to use a figure by which Christ Himself characterized it,[588] an intolerable, crushing burden. Under that permanent weight, what became of the holy "liberty of the children of God," [589] which leads one to act out of love rather than through fear, as sons of the house rather than as slaves? We might rightly apply to the Scribes these words of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." [590]

Such a formalism could not fail to produce another unfortunate result, namely, the putting all precepts on almost the same level and attributing equal importance to them. Whether it be question of a vital prescription of first rank or one of those trifles or subtleties that fill the pages of the Talmud, strict and rigid punctuality was represented as being the essential, so that frequently the principal vanished before the accessory.[591] Thus, we repeat, did this passive, drab obedience cramp the soul, blocking the way to generous heroism.

Hence, too, came those selfish tendencies that so often appear in the rabbinical writings. No doubt, considered in itself, to obey *propter retributionem* is not an unwholesome motive, since God Himself promises to reward fidelity in His service. But the words and example of the Scribes too often recall that

[587] Joel 2:13.
[588] Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; cfr. Acts 15:10.
[589] Rom. 8:21.
[590] Rom. 10:2.
[591] Cfr. Matt. 23:24 f.; Luke 11:39.

"treasure" from which, according to their language, the Lord draws forth bounteously to pour out His favors on obedient Israelites. Indeed the doctors are wont to set forth the regular performance of duty as a favor done to God and as constituting a right to His special blessings. It is the *do ut des* [592] in all its littleness. How rare were the Jews who would put into practice this admirable advice of an ancient doctor: "Be not like unto those servants who serve their master because of wages to be received, but rather be like unto those who serve without thought of reward." [593]

Nor is that all. As soon as external and simply literal obedience became the essential, one was less concerned with the morality of acts considered in themselves and was exposed to the risk of obeying for appearance sake and through a still more blameworthy spirit of hypocrisy. From Our Lord's weighty and just reproaches we know that the Scribes and Pharisees did not escape this danger. And how many others must have imitated them in that regard! [594] We understand, then, why Jesus so vigorously cried out against the pretended holiness of these false guides, who were leading the nation to destruction.[595] Their virtue was ordinarily altogether superficial, without a solid foundation. And more than that, their wickedness was sometimes hidden beneath a cloak of the sorriest hypocrisy.

The Scribes, not satisfied with being the first to practise this baneful dissimulation, countenanced it in others. When the prescriptions of the Law, interpreted and augmented by their numberless traditions, were too burdensome and annoying, they invented various procedures, often childish and sometimes immoral, by which to outwit the Law and evade its pre-

[592] "I give to you so as to have you give to me."
[593] Antigone de Socho, tractate Aboth, III, 3; cfr. Luke 17: 10.
[594] Cfr. Matt. 6: 1–18; 23: 13–31; Luke 11: 39–52.
[595] Matt. 5: 20.

scriptions. Thus, for example, on the Sabbath it was not allowable to journey a greater distance than 2,000 cubits.[596] But, due to the accommodating complacence of the Scribes, a person might create a fictitious domicile for himself by carrying ahead of time, to that distance from his home, food for two meals. By means of this subterfuge, he was authorized to journey an additional 2,000 cubits. Our Lord pointed out other like subtleties regarding the taking of an oath.[597] The worst of all related to the *corban,* by which an ill-disposed son or debtor could free himself from the obligation of succoring his needy parents or from the payment of honest debts;[598] and to marriage, the bonds of which one could break "for every cause."[599]

In the *Pirke Aboth* (I, 1), the following advice is given to the Scribes: "Be cautious in decisions, make a large number of disciples, and put a hedge about the Law." We have just treated this last point, the most important of the three. It remains for us to say a few words on the other two.

As jurists who were thoroughly acquainted with Israelitic jurisprudence, the doctors quite naturally filled the office of judge in the many courts of the country. By the same title, some of them constituted a special class, and that not the least influential, in the high court of the Sanhedrin.[600]

Another rôle, which they filled with great zeal, consisted in gathering about them a large number of disciples, to whom they strove to impart, by oral teaching, a real knowledge of the Law and of the traditions that had accumulated about it. As we remarked above, this legal jungle had not yet been put into writing at the time of Christ; it was not possible, therefore, to

[596] Five-eighths of a mile. The cubit is about 20 inches.

[597] Matt. 5:33–37; 23:16–22.

[598] Matt. 15:5; Mark 7:11 f.

[599] Matt. 19:3. We shall return to this point when we consider Christ's teaching.

[600] See *supra,* pp. 140 sq.

become master of it without the assistance of a guide. In certain important centers there were special academies for this instruction. The most famous was that of Jerusalem, whose lectures St. Paul is proud to have followed.[601] The Gospel episode usually called "Christ in the midst of the doctors" [602] gives us a correct idea of what took place in these "houses of learning." Generally the classes were held in the manner of discussions in which the pupils, seated at the teacher's feet, in Oriental fashion, had a right to take part. They had also to answer the teacher's questions and could in turn ask him other questions on the special case under consideration. And so the affair was carried on in familiar style. Reasons pro and con were advanced, decisions given on similar points by such or such well-known rabbis. In order that the formidable mass of precepts and rules that we have described should penetrate the intellect and memory of his disciples, the teacher resorted to incessant repetition, to such a point that in the Talmud the verb meaning "to repeat" also has the meaning "to teach." By way of high praise, a student was compared to a cistern with an excellent wall, well coated with lime, which does not let a single drop of water escape.[603]

Several doctors of the Law acquired great renown among the Jews. Two of the most illustrious some time before the birth of Christ, were Hillel and Shammai, founders of two rival schools. Hillel was the milder and more liberal in his decisions.[604] He is the author of the maxim: "Do not to another what you would not wish done to you; therein is the

[601] Acts 22 : 3.

[602] Luke 2 : 46 f.

[603] Aboth II, 3. According to another rabbinic proverb, a good student should not be like a funnel, which lets flow out at one end what it takes in at the other; nor like a sponge, which holds everything, even the impurities of the liquids; nor like a filter, which lets the liquor pass through and keeps only the dregs; but rather like a fan, winnowing the chaff and dust and keeping the good grain.

[604] Born 112 B. C., he lived to an advanced age.

whole law." [605] Shammai was more trenchant and severe. At the time of Christ, there was another in great repute, Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel, under whom St. Paul studied.[606]

We quote a few other fine sayings from various ancient rabbis, sayings that are of more worth than their principles: "The best preacher is the heart; the best teacher, time; the best book, the world; the best friend, God." "Devotion does not require that we pray out loud; when we pray we should raise our hearts heavenward." "He who restrains his anger merits the forgiveness of his sins." [607] But thoughts such as these are lost and engulfed in the immensity of the Talmud. They shine like a lightning flash for a moment, only to disappear the next. How different from the Savior's method of teaching! [608] The Scribes "were but the impersonal mouthpiece of tradition, an entirely human tradition. Their teaching was cold, formal, lifeless, as well for the substance as for the form. Let one but read in succession four pages of the Talmud, and he will have a true idea of the Scribes' preaching." [609] They soon understood the danger which their influence with the people would run in the face of such a rival. And so it was not long before they treated Christ with open hostility.[610] Their antagonism kept growing, as did that of their friends, the Pharisees. Jesus, on His part, loudly assailed their vices and false principles in the forceful denunciation to which we have several times alluded.[611]

[605] Bab. Talmud, Shabbath, 31, a.

[606] Acts 22:3.

[607] W. Morrison, *From Malachi to Matthew,* 1879, pp. 48 f.

[608] Cfr. Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22.

[609] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Marc, Introduction Critique et Commentaires,* pp. 33 f.

[610] Mark 2:16 f.; Luke 5:30 f.

[611] Matt. 23:1–36; Mark 12:38–40; Luke 11:45–52; 20:45–47. On the Scribes, see F. Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie,* pp. 121–143; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* II, 312–380; Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums,* pp. 135–149, and the large dictionaries of the Bible.

From the doctors of the Law we pass naturally to the three parties [612] which in Christ's time held so large a place in Palestine from the religious point of view: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

We will not dwell at any length on the Essenes. They are nowhere mentioned in the New Testament and do not seem to have had any dealings with Christ. They were, in a way, the monks of that period, having an organization like that of our religious orders. Closely bound together, for the most part they led a very austere life, practising celibacy, living together, and having their possessions in common. Some of them, however, married. They dwelt preferably in villages, because one of their chief occupations was tilling the soil. They trained themselves to perfect purity of morals, as symbolized by their white garments. No one was admitted to the various establishments of the order except after a three years' novitiate. Though they were Jews, the Essenes took no part in the bloody sacrifices of the Temple; but simply sent offerings to the sanctuary for the unbloody sacrifices. Nevertheless divine worship constituted the center of their life. Each morning they performed symbolic ablutions, to which they attached special efficacy. On more than one point they were motivated by an exaggerated mysticism. Evidently they were veritable heretics, yet their irreproachable conduct won the respect of all their countrymen.[613]

The other two religious parties of Judaism, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, appear frequently in the Gospel narrative, which describes their spirit and tendencies with strict exactness.

[612] This term is better than "sects" to designate them.

[613] Philo and Josephus never tire uttering their praises: the former, in his treatise *Quod omnis probus liber*, 12–13; the latter, in his *Bell. Iud.*, II, viii, 2–13, and in various places in his *Antiquities*. On the Essenes, see Eusebius, *Praepar. Evang.*, VIII, 11; Pliny the Elder, *Hist. Nat.*, 5, 17; Schürer, *op. cit.*, II, 556–584; Bousset, *op. cit.*, pp. 431–443.

Their origin seems not to go back beyond the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, about the year 170 B. C. The Hellenist that is, the pagan spirit, threatened at that time openly to invade, so as to absorb and destroy, the ancient religion of the true God. In consequence of this menace, there were formed in the midst of the Jewish people, and first among the upper classes, two opposite tendencies, one to repel the pagan ideas and influences, the other to accept them with some moderation. The followers of the former tendency were called *Perushim,* the "separated," a word which became "Pharisees" in our language, coming to us through the Greek and Latin.[614] The origin of these Puritans of Judaism is, therefore, very creditable. They were the associates or immediate successors of those *hhasidim,* or "pious" [615] and at the same time energetic, men who joined the Machabees in fighting the good fight against Antiochus Epiphanes and his generals [616] and who strove with all their might, with material and with moral arms, against the inroads of Hellenism. They were the earnest abettors of what the Second Book of Machabees calls *amixia,*[617] that is, the complete abstention from any mingling with the pagans.

On the contrary, the followers of the second tendency, who mostly belonged to the priestly aristocracy, were named *Tsedukim,* because they were members of the family of the High Priest "Sadoc," a contemporary of David and Solomon,[618] whose descendants performed the priestly offices until the time of Christ, or formed the chief element of the Jewish priesthood after the exile.[619] Little by little the two tendencies

[614] Φαρισαῖοι, *Pharisaei.*

[615] Ἀσιδαῖοι, Vulg., *Assidaei.*

[616] 1 Mach. 2:42 f.; cfr. 2 Mach. 14:6, etc.

[617] 2 Mach. 14:38: ἀμιξία. The Vulgate translation, *continentia,* is a little vague.

[618] 2 Kings 8:17; 3 Kings 1:8; 2:35, etc.

[619] This derivation of the name Sadducees is purely hypothetical. But from the etymological viewpoint, it seems preferable to the derivation that would connect

we have described were erected into systems, which kept drawing farther and farther apart from each other. "The Pharisees present the most characteristic manifestation of Palestinian Judaism in the time of Christ," [620] and their spirit and principles acquired so much force that "subsequent Judaism is nothing else but Pharisaism." [621] In many respects it has survived to our own day.

The Pharisees formed in the midst of their people a sort of separate confraternity, composed, according to Josephus, of 6,000 or 7,000 members. They were closely united—a circumstance that increased their influence still more. Their most distinctive trait consisted in their scrupulous attachment to all the legal observances, as they had been developed by the Scribes, whose most fervent disciples they were. Their zeal inclined more particularly to two points, which they swore, in presence of three witnesses, to observe rigorously, because they regarded them as really essential; these were: the legal purifications and the full payment of the various kinds of tithes. The meticulous and almost morbid exactness which they showed in both these matters is pointed out in various passages of the Gospels. St. Matthew and St. Luke [622] show us the Pharisees paying, not only the tithe of the chief fruits of the earth and of cattle, the only ones prescribed by the law, but also that of the most insignificant plants, such as mint, anise, cummin, and rue, used by the Jews as condiments or as medicinal remedies. As to the other part of their oath, St. Mark tells us that "the Pharisees and all the Jews eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of

it with the Hebrew word *tsaddiq*, "just," because the plural of the adjective is *tsaddiqim*, not *tseduqim*. On this latter supposition, the word "Sadducees" would indicate that they were satisfied to practise legal justice (*i. e.*, legal holiness), without going farther.

[620] H. Scott, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ*, II, 351.

[621] Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, p. 32.

[622] Matt. 22:23; Luke 11:42.

the ancients: and when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not: and many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, the washings of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of beds." [623]

Later in this study the Talmud will enable us to add to this information. We should here note well that in this matter there is no question of the care called for by the requirements of cleanliness, but merely of ceremonial ablutions imposed by the Scribes, like to those which the Mohammedans perform daily.

As we shall have occasion to show more fully, the Pharisees were no less scrupulous in conforming to the ordinances of their doctors relative to the Sabbath rest from labor. Again and again we find them in conflict with our Lord on this point, for they will not even tolerate that He perform His miraculous cures on that day.[624] As may be seen throughout the tractate *Shabbath* ("Sabbath") of the Talmud, the casuistry of the rabbis was employed in this direction with a prodigality of detail that does more honor to their imagination than to their understanding of the law and its true spirit.

On various occasions [625] and in various circumstances Christ upbraided the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. That, in fact, was one of the sect's chief vices. The piety of a large number of them was a matter of ostentation and show.[626] Their pride had no bounds.[627] Their "justice," that is, their holiness, was ordinarily more apparent than real.[628] There were, of course, good and honest Pharisees just as there were virtuous Scribes;[629] but, as a whole, they had a deplorable

[623] Mark 7:3 f.; cfr. Matt. 15:1 f.; 23:24–26.
[624] Matt. 12:1–8, 9–14; John 5:9–18; 9:14–16, etc.
[625] Matt. 23:13–15, 23, 25, etc.; Luke 13:15.
[626] Matt. 23:5, 7.
[627] Luke 11:43; 18:11; John 7:45–49.
[628] Matt. 5:20.
[629] Mark 12:28, 34; John 3:1, 10.

spirit. The Talmud itself takes a malicious pleasure in ridiculing some of them. "There are," it says, "seven Pharisees: (1) he who accepts the Law as a burden; (2) he who acts through self-interest; (3) he who strikes his head against the wall to avoid the sight of a woman; (4) he who acts through ostentation; (5) he who asks to be shown some good work to perform; (6) he who acts through fear; (7) he who acts through love." [630] It would seem, therefore, that many members of the Pharisee party were actuated by motives far from creditable.

Such were Israel's religious leaders in the time of Christ. Josephus asserts that their authority was greater than that of the priests or even of the High Priest; [631] it was comparable to that of the ancient prophets. What must be the religious life of a nation imbued to the marrow with the Pharisaic spirit? We shall presently see that they had formed it to their own image and likeness. Furthermore, by their regrettable example, they powerfully contributed to estranging from Jesus the great mass of their fellow-citizens. Between Him and those small-souled men there soon arose clashes and conflicts that kept growing. His spirit and theirs, His teaching and theirs, the holiness that He preached and that which they thought they were practicing, the basic virtues of Christianity and their "justice," superficial when it was not hypocritical, were at opposite poles. They readily understood the danger to which His preaching and conduct exposed their influence over the people, and they stood up against Him, in concert with the Scribes, their chiefs. By their repeated attacks and their hateful calumnies, they succeeded in withdrawing from Him a great number of those who at first had believed in His divine mission, and their cruel antagonism finally brought Him to Calvary—not, however, before the Savior had openly de-

[630] Moses Schwab, *Le Talmud de Jérusalem,* tractate Berakhoth, p. 171.
[631] *Ant.,* XIII, x, 5; XVII, ii, 4.

nounced their vices and stigmatized them for all time.[632]

In the Talmudic books and in Josephus as well as in the Gospels, the Sadducees appear as adversaries of the Pharisees, who gave them back enmity for enmity. We have no call to recount here their political and sometimes bloody strifes, under the first Hasmonean rulers.[633] The party of the Sadducees was relatively small in numbers, as Josephus informs us,[634] for it was recruited especially among the upper dignitaries of the sacerdotal family; but the very composition of its membership gave it considerable power in Jewish affairs. At first openly on the side of Herod's dynasty, then, to a certain extent, rallying to the Romans, they aimed particularly to acquire civil and political influence. Even though they were at the head of public divine worship, religious interests were but secondary to them. Beginning with the principle that it was enough to obey the letter of the Law, they came, by concession after concession, to reject several essential beliefs of the Jewish religion: among others, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body,[635] the existence of angels, the doctrine of Divine Providence, and even the Messianic hopes so dear to the Jewish race. Being rich, satisfied with the present life and infected by the pagan spirit, they scarcely concerned themselves with the conditions of the next life. They were the Rationalists of the period.

It was especially on the question of the Law that the Sadducees differed from the Pharisees. The former maintained, according to Josephus, that "we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word [*i. e.*, the

[632] Matt. 23:2–36; Luke 11:37–44.

[633] An abridged account of these strifes may be found in Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3d ed., I, 270–300.

[634] *Ant.*, XIII, x, 6; XVIII, i, 4.

[635] Matt. 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27; Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, II, viii, 14; *Ant.*, XVIII, i, 4.

Pentateuch], but are not to observe what is derived from the tradition of our forefathers . . . Nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the Law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent [that is, the Scribes]."[636] They therefore rejected the interpretations which the doctors and Pharisees had loaded on the Mosaic Law; they kept to its text and its literal explanation. On occasion, they were ready to make fun of the scruples of their rivals, the Pharisees; thus when, for example, the latter wished to subject the candlestick of the Temple to the ceremony of purification, the Sadducees asked them whether they were not also going to purify the sun's disk.[637]

But this does not mean that the Sadducee spirit amounted to a complete laxity with regard to the Mosaic legislation. On the contrary, the members of that party flattered themselves that they were strict observers of the Law itself. When there was question of the written law and not of the Scribes' commentaries, they showed themselves stricter in its juridical interpretation than the Pharisees. Josephus acknowledges this,[638] Pharisee though he was.

In the Gospels direct references to the Sadducees are not very frequent. It is true they are indirectly mentioned more than once under the title of chief priests. They had, moreover, less occasion than the Pharisees to enter into antagonism with Our Lord. It is He who squarely attacks them first, on their own ground, at the outset of His public life, by His exercise of authority in the Temple.[639] But gradually they, too, began to fear and then to hate Him. In order the more easily to rid

[636] *Ant.*, XIII, x, 6; XVIII, i, 4.

[637] Talmudic tractate Yadayim, IV, 6, 27; Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'Histoire et la Géographie de la Palestine*, p. 133.

[638] *Ant.*, XX, i; see also the tractate Yadayim, IV, 76.

[639] John 2:13–21.

themselves of Him, they went so far as to join with their sworn enemies, the Pharisees.[640] The High Priest Caiphas, who was the leader of the party, took charge of the movement that aimed at hastening Christ's death.[641] John the Baptist was aware of the moral dangers with which they were threatening the religion of his race; this is why he had no hesitation in calling them, along with the Pharisees, a "brood of vipers." [642] The Savior Himself plainly warned His disciples against their perverse doctrines.[643] They violently persecuted the nascent Church, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.[644]

The Herodians—so called because they were recognized partisans of the dynasty of Herod—were by that very fact in contact with the Sadducees; [645] but they constituted primarily a political association. Their numbers were not large, and they aroused the people's antipathy as much by their Graeco-Roman inclinations as by their adherence to the Herods. They, too, at once ranged themselves among the foes of Jesus.[646]

The religious condition of the mass of the Jewish people in Palestine at the beginning of our era also deserves our attention. It would be quite inexact to say that it was bad, taken as a whole. From many points of view the afflictions of the exile had borne fruit. So far as doctrine is concerned, we do not see that the nation lost any of its essential beliefs. Its theology continued to be that of its ancestors and prophets. Idolatrous practices, formerly so frequent, had long since disappeared. Outwardly and in its *ensemble,* Israel at that period was faithful to its God, as is proved by numerous details that found their way into the Gospels and other writings of the time. A

[640] Matt. 16:1; John 11:47, etc.
[641] John 11:47–53.
[642] Matt. 3:7.
[643] Matt. 16:6.
[644] Acts 4:1; 5:27; 22:30.
[645] St. Mark indirectly mentions this fact (8:15) when speaking of the leaven of Herod, whereas St. Matthew mentions the leaven of the Sadducees.
[646] Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13.

celebrated doctor, Simon the Just, who lived at the beginning of the second century B. C., said that "the world rests on three things: the Law, worship, and works of mercy." [647] Let us examine what was, in this threefold respect, the attitude of the Jews at the time of Christ.

They were regular in the celebration of Sabbaths and festivals and they eagerly attended the religious exercises in the synagogues. They made the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, prescribed for the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Every day a large number of them came to adore and implore Yahweh in the Temple. Daily, too, the blood of victims flowed in streams, and their flesh was consumed on the altar of holocausts. In truth, the Jews were proud of their worship and took a very active part in it. Even during the war with Rome, and at a time when defeat seemed near at hand, they refused to believe that those ceremonies, to which they were so attached, could ever disappear. On the very eve of the taking of Jerusalem they expected a miracle to be performed by the Messias to save the Temple and its worship.[648] The God of Israel might at that time have said to His people, as He had in times past: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; and thy burnt offerings are always in My sight." [649]

Private prayer was much in honor. Every Israelite worthy of the name recited long formulas of invocation and petition morning and night,[650] and he liked to surround his least acts—for example, his meals[651]—and his whole existence with prayers. Fasting was also considered an excellent practice of piety and at times was performed with extreme rigor. Fasting on the second and fifth days of the week was particularly

[647] Pirke Aboth, I, 2.

[648] Josephus, *Bell. Iud.*, VI, v, 2–3.

[649] Ps. 49:8.

[650] Especially the Shemone Esre, composed, as its name indicates, of "eighteen" invocations. Text in Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3d ed., II, 460–463.

[651] Matt. 14:19; 15:36; 26:30; Rom. 14:6; 1 Tim. 4:4, etc.

recommended; some fervent Jews undertook to fast on these days for a whole year.[652] The Gospel speaks of the frequent fasting of the Pharisees and the precursor's disciples,[653] and the Christian Church has adopted the practice of this holy mortification, of which her Divine Master gave her the example and precept.[654]

Among pious practices, besides the phylacteries and sacred fringes mentioned above,[655] we must not forget the use of the *mezuza,* a kind of metal tube containing little parchment rolls, on which were written various Old Testament texts. One of these was placed at the entrance of the house as a protection.[656] Our Lord Himself, in His discourse about the end of the world,[657] acquaints us with the works of mercy practiced by His countrymen: "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you covered Me: sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me." The most usual and most important of all was almsgiving. The Jews constantly practiced it among themselves.

In itself that was all very fine. Unfortunately, however, in the case of a large number, these acts lost nearly their whole moral value, for the Scribes and Pharisees had but too well succeeded in modelling the Jews of that time after their own sorry image and infecting them with their vices. Often, therefore, obedience to the law was more mechanical and external

[652] Cfr. Luke 18: 12. Tacitus, *Hist.,* 5, 4, speaks of these facts, and according to Suetonius, *August.,* c. 76, the Emperor Augustus one day boasted of having fasted "like a Jew."

[653] Matt. 9: 14; Mark 2: 18, etc.

[654] Matt. 4: 2; 6: 16–18; 9: 15, etc.

[655] Page 175, *supra.*

[656] Every Jewish apartment still has its *mezuza,* which is respectfully touched by each person on entering. And miniature ones, in gold or silver, are carried on the person.

[657] Matt. 25: 35 f.; cfr. Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie,* p. 274.

than hearty and supernatural. The spirit of true piety was lacking, and worship was, for many, only a cold formality and show. Virtue consisted particularly in minute observances and the "traditions of the ancients," such as the doctors of the Law had established. So Christ was right in saying to the crowd about Him in the Temple porch: "None of you keepeth the Law." [658] And it was not without good reason that He compared the theocratic nation, from the religious point of view, to a herd of sheep without a shepherd,[659] nay, what is still worse, to sheep led by selfish and mercenary shepherds.[660] What a gloomy picture! How much needed to be done to prepare this people for the Messianic salvation!

What most impresses one in studying the religious conditions of the Jewish people during the period we are considering, is the intense and almost unanimous eagerness with which the coming of the Messias was awaited.[661] The Gospels as well as profane documents describing that time reveal this expectation ceaselessly, under every form. Many signs there were proclaiming that the prophecies regarding the coming of the Redeemer promised to Israel for so many centuries were soon going to be fulfilled. Hence men's minds were absorbed in the hope of witnessing this unparalleled event.

Again and again this hope re-echoes through the pages of the Gospel, although nowhere systematically set forth. After

[658] John 7:19.

[659] Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34.

[660] John 10:8, 10, 12 f.

[661] On this especially interesting subject, of which we can here mention only the most characteristic features, see J. Langen, *Das Judenthum in Palästina zur Zeit Christi,* 1860; Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie,* 1880; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah,* 1883, I, 160–179; II, 434–440, 707–738; E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* II, 496–556; W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums,* pp. 195–219; Volz, *Jüdische Eschatologie von Daniel bis Akiba dargestellt,* 1913; Lagrange, *Le Messianisme chez les Juifs,* 1909; Lepin, *Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu,* 1904, pp. 1–44; F. Tillmann, *Der Menschensohn, Jesu Selbstzeugnis,* 1907, pp. 144–169. See also, by way of contrast, Appendix VII, *infra.*

relating the presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple, St. Luke tells us that the aged Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel"; and shortly after he adds that Anna, a prophetess, "spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel." [662] In another place he speaks of Joseph of Arimathea, who "looked for the Kingdom of God": [663] which is another way of expressing the same idea. When the precursor appeared and, by his holiness and preaching, produced so lively an impression, "all were thinking in their hearts of John, that perhaps he might be the Christ." [664] John attracts the attention even of the Sanhedrin, which sends official representatives to ask him whether he is the Christ.[665] The Samaritans, as well as the Jews, were then expecting the coming of the Redeemer, hence that remark of their countrywoman: "I know that the Messias cometh." [666] If, from the outset of Our Lord's ministry, enthusiastic throngs came from all parts of Palestine and pressed around Him and looked upon Him as the "Son of David," was it not partly because of that expectancy with which all hearts were pulsating? Somewhat later, after the first multiplication of the loaves, those who had witnessed that miracle cried out: "This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world," that is, the Messias, and they sought to bring Him to Jerusalem by force to make Him king.[667] And there were many other similar incidents,[668] which strike a reader of the Gospel the more forcibly as they are mentioned incidentally and without any ulterior thought on the part of the sacred writers.

The idea of the coming of the promised liberator also filled

[662] Luke 2: 25, 38.
[663] Luke 23: 51.
[664] Luke 3: 15.
[665] John 1: 15–28.
[666] John 4: 25.
[667] John 6: 14 f.
[668] Cfr. Matt. 11: 3; John 7: 31, etc.

the Jewish writings composed between the close of the second century B. C. and the second century of our era. A study of them shows that the Synagogue of that period applied to the Messias four hundred fifty-six Old Testament passages, of which number seventy-five were taken from the Pentateuch, two hundred forty-three from the Prophetical Books, and one hundred thirty-eight from the other parts of the Hebrew Bible.[669] Does this not conclusively show that the thought of the Messias, the longing for the Messias, the hope of numberless consolations and blessings that He was to bestow on His people, thrilled all hearts and minds? The liturgical prayers called for Him in loud accents. Urgently they implored God: "O Lord, cause to come forth the scion of David, Thy servant, and establish His kingdom *in our day!*" The words "Son of David," "throne of David," "Kingdom of Heaven," "Kingdom of the great King" were on every tongue. And how many impostors profited by that pious enthusiasm to impersonate the Messias![670]

It is not only the Targums and the Talmud that voice the feelings of the whole nation on this point. The books known by the title of Jewish Apocalypses—before Christ, the Book of Henoch, the Sibylline Books, the Psalter of Solomon; at about the time of the Gospels, the Assumption of Moses and the Book of the Jubilees; later, the Apocalypses of Baruch, Esdras, etc.—frequently manifest that same expectancy, vouched for also by Philo and Josephus. And so powerful and tenacious did it become that, from the midst of the Jewish people, it penetrated the pagan world, as we find expressly stated by the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius.[671]

But just what idea was formed of that Messias, whose coming was so eagerly desiderated by all true Israelites? What

[669] Edersheim, *op. cit.*

[670] Matt. 24:4 f.; Mark 13:5 f.; Luke 21:8.

[671] We shall cite these celebrated texts further on.

sort of description of Him was set forth by the rabbis and apocalyptical writers? His portrait, as it left their hands and was engraved in the popular imagination, was not devoid of some resemblance to that which we are presently to study in the ancient oracles. But how they had disfigured it, under the pretext of embellishing it! By taking literally what was intended as an ideal in those inspired prophecies, by giving a political interpretation to certain passages whose meaning was spiritual and figurative,[672] they had sadly profaned its spirit and distorted its meaning. Bowed down as they were, even after the Babylonian Captivity, under the yoke of Persia, Greece, and Rome, the Jews were wont to associate, before anything else, with the idea of the Messias the hope of their national restoration and recovered independence. For them, that was the essential thing. In the Messias they saw, then, a mighty instrument that would help them win back their former glory and privileges. In their thought of Him and in all their longing appeals for His coming, they envisaged much more their own exaltation than any moral salvation brought either to themselves or to the rest of mankind. Hence, in what concerned the Messias, "deliverance from pagan domination became the irresistible refrain of every Jewish aspiration." [673] The Messianic expectancy, to a certain extent, became debased. It had in great measure lost its religious character.

Such was the general idea which most of the Jews had gradually formed of the Messias. And they entered into the minutest details, contradictory at more than one point, as to His nature and rôle, to such an extent that "the human imagination could hardly be inventive enough to apply the then existing Messianic concepts to one being." [674]

What, then, was this Messias? The names given Him desig-

[672] Among them are, for example, Isaias' grandiose descriptions of the Messianic golden age; cfr. Is. 35:10; 40:9–11; 41:1 f., etc.

[673] Langen, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

[674] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

nate Him as being a very great personage. He was called the Elect, the Consoler, the Redeemer, the Son of Man, at times the Son of God, but in a very broad sense. But most of all they called Him the "Messias," from a Hebrew word [675] meaning "anointed," signifying the choice which the Lord had made of Him, the royal power which He had conferred on Him. Those who believed in His divinity, following certain indications of the prophets, were very few in number, as we see from the example of the Apostles, who recognized the Savior's divine nature only after considerable time and by virtue of a special revelation.[676] Lastly, He was believed to be invested with higher attributes, incompatible with human nature pure and simple. He had been created previous to the universe and would live eternally. Raised above the angels, endowed with extraordinary wisdom and power, He would possess perfect holiness and would be absolutely proof against sin. So penetrated were the Jews with the idea of His superhuman greatness, that they could hardly admit, despite the clearness and exactness of the prophetic oracles, that He should have aught in common with suffering. On this point, too, the attitude of the Apostles [677] reveals the insurmountable repugnance felt by their fellow-Jews. "Taken as a whole, rabbinical Judaism closed its eyes to the Biblical texts which foretold the sufferings of the Messias." [678]

Preceded by Elias, whose mission would consist in making Him known to the world, the Christ-King was to be born at Bethlehem, but to remain invisible and hidden for a certain while. Then suddenly would occur His glorious and victorious manifestation. He is represented as rising up, like an irre-

[675] Mashiah. In Aramaic Meshihha, from which the Greeks formed the word Μεσσίας, the Latins *Messias*, dropping the guttural.

[676] Cfr. Matt. 16:16 f.

[677] Matt. 16:21–23; Mark 9:29–31; Luke 18:31–34.

[678] Lagrange, *Le Messianisme chez les Juifs*, p. 239. On this whole question, see pages 236–256 of that same scholarly work.

sistible conqueror, against all the pagan powers, against the Roman Empire in particular, to subjugate it completely. Here, however, the documents are not in perfect accord. According to some,[679] the destruction of paganism takes place under the form of a bloody battle. According to others,[680] there is no real combat; it is rather a judgment of God and of the Messias, reducing Israel's enemies to powerlessness.

After the divine wrath has been appeased by this punishment of the pagans, who are all cast out of Palestine, the reign of the Messias begins. Those Jews who were dispersed throughout the world are miraculously returned to the soil of the Holy Land, there to enjoy the felicity of that blessed reign. Jerusalem is rebuilt, enlarged, and marvelously adorned. The Temple is raised from its ruins and the ceremonies of worship are reëstablished. The rabbis are at a loss to find colors brilliant enough to depict the splendors of this golden age, which will be prolonged for several thousands of years in an unbroken era of peace and glory and happiness. Nature takes on an astounding fecundity; the wildest animals lose their ferocity and docilely place themselves at the service of the Jews; all trees without exception bear juicy, nutritious fruit. There is no poverty or suffering of any kind. Childbirth takes place without pain and harvests are gathered without fatigue. There is no more injustice on earth, and no more sin.

Once having set out on this path, those who assumed the duty of describing the joys and glory of the Messianic reign are unable to restrain themselves, and they enter into all the realistic details that an Oriental imagination is capable of inventing. To hold all its inhabitants, the city of Jerusalem will become as large as Palestine, and Palestine will be as vast as the whole earth. In the Holy City the gates and windows will

[679] The Psalter of Solomon, the Sibylline Oracles, Philo, etc.
[680] The Apocalypses of Baruch and Esdras, etc.

consist of precious stones: the walls will be of gold and silver.[681]

The abundance of the crops will be such as has never before been heard of, and will be produced without the ground being tilled. The earth will also furnish magnificent clothes and exquisite food. Wheat will attain the height of palm trees, it will even grow as high as the mountain tops.

But enough. Let us leave these vagaries, often so curious when they do not become gross. The saddest part of all this is that when Jesus, the true Messias appears, mild and humble, without any political or warlike splendor, with nothing to portend the terrible and victorious conqueror, but rather with the marks of a religious reformer, a victim offering Himself to expiate and blot out the sins of the world, they refuse to recognize Him. They even brutally reject Him and put Him to death on the cross. And so we see Him protest with all His might and on every occasion against this sad departure from the Messianic ideal, a departure that falsified and profaned the divine oracles.

Happily, even in that partly degenerate Israel, God did not leave Himself without witnesses. It is true He did not choose them from the ranks of the Scribes and Pharisees. If those choice souls whom we see at the threshold of the Gospel about the Infant Savior, were not reckoned among the mighty ones of the Jewish nation, at least they were already practicing Christian holiness in advance, obeying the divine Law through love and without sordidness of heart, and grasping the true significance of the prophecies regarding the Messias. It is they who exemplified sincere piety. Mary and Joseph, Zachary and Elizabeth, the lowly shepherds of Bethlehem, the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna, and others were looking for

[681] We read similar details in St. John's Apocalypse, 21: 15–21; but they are obviously symbolic.

the true redemption of Israel and were the first to taste its sweetness. In the coming of the Messias, these noble hearts saw chiefly the granting of pardon for the sins of their race, the reign of peace between God and man, the establishment on earth of a spiritual kingdom whose head would be the Christ and which would bring true happiness, in this life and in the next, to all who would obey the laws of that glorious and most holy King. The three canticles of the Gospels—the *Magnificat,* the *Benedictus,* and the *Nunc Dimittis*—are admirable evidences of that faith, which they show us in all its purity and beauty.

PART II

Christ Before the Incarnation

Hidden at first from all eternity in the bosom of God, His Father, the future Redeemer of mankind continued to remain there for another four thousand years that correspond to the duration of the Old Covenant. But it was not in an absolute manner, for the Messianic prophecies wonderfully announced and prepared for His advent. We will merely cast a rapid glance at the eternal life of the Word; on the second of these periods we will pause at greater length.

CHAPTER I

The Word in the Bosom of the Father

FURTHER on we shall have to study the principal proofs which are contained in the Gospels and which peremptorily demonstrate the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless it is proper, even at this point, to quote in full the magnificent preface by which the Evangelist St. John, at the very opening of his Gospel, introduces the august Person whose history he proposes briefly to relate: [682] "In the beginning [683] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the

[682] See the commentaries by Knabenbauer, Corluy, Schanz, F. Godet, Th. Zahn, and L. Cl. Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Jean,* pp. 1–16.

[683] That is, at the beginning of the created world; consequently at the time of creation. The sacred writer carries us back beyond that period, in order to allow us, for a moment, to penetrate into the eternity of the Godhead, and shows us the eternal Word, existing in God and with God, at a time when as yet no creature had received life. Cf. Bossuet, *Élévations sur les Mystères,* 12th week, 7th and 8th elevations.

flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. John beareth witness of Him, and crieth out, saying: This was He of whom I spoke: He that shall come after me, is preferred before me: because He was before me. And of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace. For the Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

In these lines, which are numbered among the most sublime ever penned, we have a majestic prologue to the life of Christ. In a few moving and dramatic sentences, the Evangelist lets us know that the Word,[684] the glorious Son of the Father, was made man out of love for us, in order to bring to our poor earth, encompassed by dense shadows and threatened with everlasting damnation, life, light, and salvation. At the same time these lines permit us to witness, by anticipation, the partial thwarting of this plan of infinite mercy. This page, therefore, contains a faithful summary of Our Lord's life history. Especially does it reveal, in the beginning, His higher nature. In spite of the humble aspects under which the Gospel narrative presents Him to us—that of a helpless Babe, of a poor carpenter of Nazareth, of a missionary fatigued by His journeys through Palestine to preach the Gospel and not having of His own even a stone on which to rest His head, that of the Man of Sorrows undergoing every humiliation and suffering—Jesus was "true God of true God," Son of God in a strict sense, eternal, infinitely powerful, infinitely great, vested with all the attributes of divinity.

[684] A name of remarkable depth and beauty, designating Jesus Christ as the inner and substantial word of God the Father, as His limitless wisdom and understanding. This expression is used only in the Fourth Gospel, and there only twice (John 1:1, 14).

It has been fittingly said [685] that Christian metaphysics, from St. Augustine to St. Anselm, from St. Anselm to Malebranche and Bossuet, "has delved into this abyss without ever reaching its depths." We repeat the well known reflections of the Bishop of Hippo on this sublime exordium: "The other three Evangelists, as it were, walk on the earth with the God-Man. They furnish few details as to His divinity. But St. John, as if he were unable to endure keeping his feet on earth, at the very beginning of his writing rises, not only above the earth, above the whole expanse of air and sky, but even above the entire angelic hosts and all the powers invisible; he rises even to Him by whom all things were made, saying: In the beginning was the Word . . . Like none other, he has spoken of the Lord's divinity . . . Not without good reason does he relate in his Gospel that at the Last Supper he leaned on the Lord's breast. What he there learned in secret, he has openly revealed so that all nations might know, not only the Son of God's Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, but also the fact that before the Incarnation He was the only Son of the Father, the Word of the Father, eternal like unto Him of whom He is begotten, equal to Him who sent Him." [686]

Christ was before His Incarnation, and He lost none of His divine prerogatives by being made flesh.[687] So it is with a veritable accent of triumph and love that St. John proclaims the immense happiness granted him and the other disciples to contemplate, under the humble covering of our humanity, the eternal and only Son of the Father.

It was impossible to say more clearly, at the very beginning

[685] Baunard, *L'Apôtre S. Jean*, 1869, p. 381.

[686] *Tract. in Ioannem*, XXXVI; cfr. St. John Chrysostom, *Homil. in Ioan.*, I, n. 2.

[687] St. John "does not falter in the presence of the realism of this expression" (Mgr. Baunard, *op. cit.*, p. 372), which so well describes the profound self-abasement of the Incarnate Word.

of the Gospel, what was the nature of Him whose life we are about to study.

St. Paul, writing to certain devout Christians, says, in an equally famous passage, that Christ Jesus, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." [688]

It is not without interest to note that St. John, concluding his Gospel as he began it, takes pains to say that he wrote it expressly to show "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

[688] Phil. 2:6–11.

CHAPTER II

The Messias Gradually Revealed to Israel by the Messianic Prophecies

WHILE remaining hid in the bosom of His Father, the Divine Word, the future Messias, nevertheless little by little announced His coming, during the long period of preparation that passed between the fall of our First Parents and the blessed hour of His Incarnation. He did so especially by the gradual succession of oracles of a special kind, to which has been given the name of *Messianic*[689] *prophecies*. They form a remarkable chain of evidence, the first link of which was, so to speak, put into the hands of Adam himself, and the last link connected directly with the Messias, through the intermediary of His precursor, John the Baptist. It is a long series of bright rays, that successively enlightened all the periods of history previous to the coming of Christ. These are resounding voices, crying out, at God's command and under His inspiration: The Messias will come, have confidence; He comes, make ready to receive Him; He has come, give Him a fitting welcome.

Strewn through the Bible, set in their historical and literary milieu, these prophecies have each its own beauty. But when we group them, they form a whole that makes them more wonderful and striking. We might compare them to a majestic edifice,[690] built little by little by the Holy Spirit Himself with the aid of secondary architects, who are none other than the

[689] That is, referring to the Messias.

[690] It has also been said that the Messianic oracles, taken as a whole, form a beautiful diptych, one panel containing the prophecy and the other its fulfilment.

sacred writers. Each one of them, without knowing it, laid stones that were to support the work of his successors. In fact—and this is not the least surprising element in that mystical edifice—notwithstanding the great diversity and large number of the builders, and despite the fact that they took thousands of years in constructing it, the whole work is divinely harmonious. As Pascal wrote: "Had a single man composed a book of prophecies, and had Jesus Christ come conformably to those prophecies, that would be evidence of an infinite power. But there was more than this. There was a succession of men for four thousand years, constantly and without variation, one after the other, predicting this same event," [691] and supplementing one another while thus predicting it. And not only do they supplement one another, but they serve mutually to explain one another, now by adding some new detail, now by developing, to render it clearer or more striking, some feature indicated by their predecessors.

After this simple observation it is easy to understand that the Messianic prophecies are the culminating point of the revelations of the Old Covenant. As Leibnitz forcefully said: "To prove that Jesus Christ is the Messias announced by so many prophets is, next to the demonstration of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, to give the most important of the proofs of religion." In fact, the complete fulfilment by our Lord, in due time, of predictions so seemingly incongruous at first sight, and often separated by considerable intervals of time, could not have occurred by a chance coincidence. It can only be the work of God, since it was humanly speaking impossible that it should be foreseen and combined by those who announced it. This proof, consequently, has extraordinary force.

In God's plan these celebrated prophets had for their chief purpose to prepare men, in particular the people of Israel, for

[691] *Pensées*, ed. Havet, p. 274.

the coming of the Messias. An event with such happy and serious consequences for mankind, could not take place, so to speak, *ex abrupto*. Having been decided upon in the divine counsels from all eternity, it was slowly and delicately predicted during a period of about forty centuries. Just as, in the world of nature, the Creator carefully directed the transitions that we constantly admire, so, too, did He proceed as though by successive stages to the most perfect of all His works, that of the redemption of the human race. That procedure was needful if the Savior was to be worthily received and if mankind was to profit by His blessings.

Assuredly more than one obscurity overshadowed these oracles before they were fulfilled. At first glance it even seems that contradictions exist in them. But Christ, and His Apostles after Him, rent the veils and broke the seals. The Savior's life explained and reconciled them all. Besides, while most of the Messianic prophecies should be explained literally, others there are which call for a figurative interpretation: among these are the ones that refer to what is called the golden age of the Messias. Christ must be Son of Man and at the same time Son of God. He is the descendant and heir of David, and yet He had to wear a crown of thorns. He came here below to establish the Kingdom of God, but that Kingdom will reach its consummation only rather late, and then only will Jesus enjoy His full glory and power. Everything, therefore, is in harmony in the ancient oracles, explained according to the Holy Spirit who inspired them. Thoroughly to comprehend their full force and to put it in striking relief, it would be necessary to quote them almost integrally, then to give at least a succinct explanation of them. But that would require an entire volume by itself. The most we can do here is to indicate the principal features, not however without inviting our readers to a deeper study of this question, which is as engaging as it is important, either in Old Testament commen-

taries or in works that have been written expressly on the subject.[692]

The concatenation of these superb oracles will be rendered more evident if we list them, at least in a general way, according to their chronological order. In this respect they are divisible into three groups. There are, first of all, those we read in the five Books of the Pentateuch, corresponding to the early ages of sacred history; then, those found in the Books of Kings, starting with the reign of David, the Psalms, and the other poetic Books of the Old Testament; lastly, those dating from the time of the Major and Minor Prophets. Even this simple enumeration shows us that the Messianic idea shone, though in various degrees, through the whole existence of God's people. It is a golden thread closely uniting all parts of the Bible.

I. The epoch from Adam to the death of Moses may be subdivided into three periods: that of the earthly paradise, that of the patriarchs, and that following the flight from Egypt.

1. It is in the shadows of Eden, sadly darkened by the fall of our First Parents, that God, who pardoned even while He punished, addressed to the guilty ones what has been well named the *Protevangelium,* that is, the "first glad tidings." [693]

[692] See particularly, among Catholic authors, St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 50–55, 66, 108; St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* XVIII, 28–35; L. Reinke, *Die messianischen Weissagungen bei den Propheten,* 5 vols., 1859–1862; J. Corluy, *Spicilegium Dogmatico-Biblicum,* 2 vols., 1884, I, 347–529; Meignan, *Les Prophéties Messianiques,* 6 vols., 1856–1894; Abbé de Broglie, *Questions Bibliques,* 1897, pp. 329–380; Lagrange, articles on various Messianic prophecies in the *Revue Biblique,* October, 1904, January and April, 1905, January and October, 1906; *J. Döller, Die Messiaserwartung im Alten Testament,* 1911. Among Protestant authors the following may be consulted: F. Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies,* English trans., 1880, and *Old Testament History of the Redemption,* English trans., 1881; E. Böhl, *Christologie des Alten Testaments, oder Auslegung der wichtigsten messianischen Weissagungen,* 1882; C. A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy, the Prediction of the Fulfilment of Redemption through the Messiah, a Critical Study of the Messianic Passages of the Old Testament,* 1887.

[693] This happy expression is, we think, Tertullian's.

After pronouncing judgment on the tempter serpent, He adds these words, which Adam and Eve would carry with them out of Paradise as a living consolation in their distress: [694] "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." [695] The promise of redemption was, no doubt, as yet vague and undetermined; the Savior of mankind, which was infected by Adam's sin, appeared here only in a collective manner, so to speak.

Yet, in spite of the generalization, it is the Messias who is represented by the expression "her seed"; it is by Him that the final victory will be won over the devil, the foe of that poor humanity of which He will one day be a part. Victory is certain, and later oracles will clearly attribute it to Him.

2. The second Messianic prophecy carries us to the second cradle of humanity. It is a step ahead, for it connects with an individual name, with the head of a particular family, the blessing promised to the whole race of the woman. Noë, by divine inspiration, announces to his son Sem that Yahweh will be in a special way his God [696] and the God of his descendants, that He will enter into exceedingly close relations with them, for it is from their posterity that the Redeemer will one day be born.

The circle, still rather large, again contracts with Abraham, so justly called the father of the faithful, a member of the great family of Sem. From distant Chaldea, where he was born, God led him to the land of Chanaan, the future Palestine, which would one day be the land of Christ, and there one after the other He made him several promises by which He established with Abraham and his posterity a close, perma-

[694] Gen. 3:15.

[695] This translation is according to the Hebrew text. On the feminine pronoun *ipsa*, which is the Vulgate rendition and which directly designates the woman, see the commentators.

[696] Gen. 9:26: "Blessed be Jehovah, God of Sem!"

nent covenant. In especially solemn terms He made of Abraham a center and source of blessings for all the peoples of the earth.[697] Abraham was thus constituted the ancestor, one of the most glorious ancestors, of the Messias.[698] In fact, SS. Peter and Paul [699] expressly affirm that it is in the person of Christ that the race of Abraham was finally blessed. Jesus Himself refers to these prophecies when He says: "Abraham . . . rejoiced, that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad." [700]

After Abraham's death, the Messianic promise was renewed to Isaac [701] and Jacob,[702] who in turn became the mediators of the divine blessings for the whole human race. At the same time it was further circumscribed and became still more precise, due to successive eliminations which, just as they had formerly discarded Cain and Japheth, then Abraham's brothers, then Ismael, so they cut off from the chosen race the irreligious Esau and the brethren of Juda. Shortly before his death, Jacob, supernaturally enlightened, uttered a celebrated prophecy,[703] in which, foretelling the future of his sons, he announced that the Savior of the world would belong to the tribe of Juda and would hold the royal scepter. It is with David that royalty becomes the *appanage* of that glorious tribe and, as clearly appears from Christ's genealogical tree according to St. Matthew,[704] the last heir of that prince was the Messias.

3. Some centuries later, Balaam, called upon by the King of Moab to curse the Hebrews, who, being then on the point of

[697] Gen. 12:2 f.; 17:5–8; 18:18; 22:16–18.
[698] Matt. 1:1 f.
[699] Acts 3:24–26; Gal. 3:16. See also Luke 1:54 f., 72 f.
[700] John 8:56.
[701] Gen. 26:3 f., 28 f.
[702] Gen. 28:13 f.; 35:11–14.
[703] Gen. 49:8–12.
[704] Matt. 1:2–16.

entering the Promised Land, were menacing his territory, on the contrary blessed them in four successive oracles, the last of which has a high Messianic import:

"I shall see him, but not now.
I shall behold him, but not near.
A star shall rise out of Jacob
And a scepter shall spring up from Israel."

It is, in short, a repetition of Jacob's prophecy: the future Messias is again presented under the aspects of a victorious king,[705] prefigured by the scepter and the star.

After having been little by little individualized, the divine promise, when we come to Moses, takes another step in this same direction. Israel's great lawmaker, who had collected the oracles that we just pointed out in order to transmit them to future ages, receives one himself, by no means the least important, from the Lord's mouth. "I will raise them up a prophet," the Lord said to him, "out of the midst of their brethren like to thee: and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him. And he that will not hear his words, which he shall speak in my name, I will be the revenger." [706] Hence it follows that Christ, like Moses, is to fill the office of lawmaker, mediator, and prophet. "Moses . . . wrote of me," said our Lord one day, referring to this great prophecy.[707]

II. Towards the end of the troubled period of the Judges, we have the canticle of Anna, the mother of Samuel, a canticle which is so gentle and withal so forceful a poem, and from which Mary, the mother of Jesus, took some expressions for her still sweeter *Magnificat*. Therein we hear a resounding Messianic note: [708]

[705] Num. 24: 17.
[706] Deut. 18: 18 f.
[707] John 5: 46; cfr. Acts 3: 18; 7: 37.
[708] 1 Kings 2: 10.

"The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth,
And He shall give empire to His king,
And shall exalt the horn [709] of His Christ."

Already set forth several times, the idea of the Messias' royalty will go continually forward,—except to a certain extent during the grievous and humiliating period of the Babylonian Captivity,—and it will even progress rapidly. This happened first in the reign of David. The Messianic rays, after being rare and isolated during long centuries (although they were sufficient to illumine and give warmth to whole periods), now suddenly shine forth in all directions and acquire an incomparable brightness, beginning with this ruler, who "beheld the Messias from afar and sang of him with an unrivaled magnificence." [710]

Let us recur to the Messias-King. When, toward the end of his life, David conceived the project of building a magnificent temple to honor the God of Israel, the prophet Nathan was sent to tell him that this privilege was reserved for his son Solomon, and also to promise him, in reward for his generous purpose, that his descendants would forever occupy the theocratic throne.[711] While many details of this prophecy apply primarily to Solomon and the other successors of David, other details fit only the Messias, in whom alone they could be realized. Such, then, is the ideal king, whose coming is here announced: this Anointed of the Lord, this true Christ, will be an everlasting King and His reign will have no end, as the angel Gabriel repeats later to Mary.[712] This is the "Son of David" indicated with a new clearness. Although He is not

[709] A frequent Hebraism: the power.

[710] Bossuet, *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle,* Part II, chap. 4.

[711] 2 Kings 7: 1–17. This oracle, one of the most important of those contained in the Old Testament, was later developed in grandiose terms, in Ps. 88 (Hebrew, 89), 1–38.

[712] Luke 1: 32 f.

directly named, His image floats, so to speak, in a glorious future, as the final term of David's direct heirs.

As Bossuet reminds us in the words quoted above, this prince himself beheld his illustrious descendant from afar, in a series of luminous prophecies that represent Him as a distinct Person and clearly describe many circumstances of His life.[713] According to those Psalms justly attributed to David, the Messias truly shares our human nature. The Lord Himself declared to His Christ: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee";[714] and to Him He gave an eternal, unlimited power, an unparalleled glory, which all peoples will be bound to acknowledge, if they would not incur the weight of His just wrath.[715] It was the royal poet's privilege to predict for the Christ a sublime office which the early prophecies had never pointed out: with the dignity of king, the Messias will combine in His Person that of "priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech,"[716] and in that capacity will sacrifice to the Lord a victim of infinite price, which will be none other than His own Person and which will replace all other sacrifices.[717] This idea of the *Christus patiens* is developed with surprising clearness in various parts of the Psalter; particularly in the twenty-first Psalm, of which it has been said that it resembles a prediction less than it does a historical narrative, so many and precise are the details it gives of the bloody tragedy of Calvary.[718] Yet the august Victim will remain but a very short time in the tomb; an early and glorious

[713] Cfr. Meignan, *David Roi, Psalmiste et Prophète*, pp. 215–481.

[714] Ps. 2:7; see also Ps. 44:7 and 109:3, according to the Vulgate.

[715] Ps. 2, 44, 88, 109, etc.

[716] Ps. 109:4.

[717] Ps. 39:6–9. St. Paul gives an admirable commentary on this passage in Heb. 10:5–10.

[718] Various characteristic details of the Passion appear also in other Psalms, as the Evangelists inform us. Cfr. Ps. 40:10 (John 13:18 and 17:12; Act 1:16); Ps. 68:22 (Matt. 27:48, etc.).

resurrection will forever consecrate His glory and authority.[719]

It is, therefore, quite correct to say that the Messianic oracles in the Psalms "help us in a surprising manner to follow the progress of revelation in the matter of the most beautiful and important of the prophecies of the Old Covenant." [720] Not only is the Psalter, taken as a whole, thoroughly impregnated with the idea of the Messias, such as it had been handed down by earlier predictions, but this idea receives a magnificent increase. It becomes more and more clear and precise. It is not, therefore, surprising that, of all the Old Testament Books, the Psalter is the one most often quoted in the New Testament.[721]

Moreover, other poems than those of David refer directly to the Messias. Such is Psalm 44 (Hebrew 45), composed by a Levite belonging to the family of Core, who in choicest terms speaks of the mystical union of God and the Synagogue, especially that of Christ and the Church.[722] Such, too, is Psalm 71 (Hebrew 72), in which Solomon celebrates the perfect justice of the Messias-King, His incomparable love for the poor and lowly, the universality, perpetuity, and prosperity of His reign.

That same ruler had the honor also of being chosen by God to give the world a new idea regarding the Messias, thus adding a new jewel to the crown of Christ. He who, at the glorious opening of his reign, earnestly besought the Lord for the gift of wisdom above all other gifts,[723] had, as a sacred writer, the mission of establishing a close association between the

[719] Ps. 15:10; cfr. Acts 2:25–32; 13:35–37.

[720] Fillion, *La Sainte Bible Commentée,* IV, 11.

[721] It has been reckoned that, of the 283 quotations which the New Testament takes from the Old, 116 are from the Psalms.

[722] This thought is developed still more wonderfully in the Canticle of Canticles, as also in several passages in the Prophets and in the New Testament. See especially Matt. 9:15; John 3:29; Ephes. 5:22–33, etc.

[723] 3 Kings 3:4–15.

Messias and Wisdom personified and possessing divine attributes, in such a way as to prepare for the idea of the Logos, or Word, such as we see it at the beginning of St. John's Gospel. This he does in a most charming description in the Book of Proverbs.[724] Long after Solomon, another Israelitic poet, whose name has remained unknown, took up this theme and likewise portrayed Wisdom [725] in colors that truly make it a divine hypostasis similar to the Logos. The son of Sirach did the same thing in the Book of Ecclesiasticus,[726] making use of striking figures.[727]

III. When, in the ninth century before Christ, the era of the Prophets, properly so called, opened, the promise of the future Redeemer resounded with new vigor and clearness, thanks to numerous revelations concerning particular details of the Messias' life and certain general notions.

Three of these latter deserve to be considered separately. There is first the revelation describing, more eloquently than had previously been done, in colors alternately soft and brilliant, what we have called the Messianic golden age, that is, the peace, glory, and happiness of Christ's reign in this world and in the next. To be sure, the expressions are nearly always figures of speech, which we should be careful not to take literally, as was so unfortunately done by the Jews of our Savior's time. Nevertheless they are remarkably expressive and characteristic, in setting forth the blessings of every kind which the Messias is to bestow on Israel and all mankind. Isaias has justly become renowned by those glorious descriptions that transform the earth into a new Eden, even more perfect than the first.[728]

[724] Prov. 8: 22–31.

[725] In the Book of Wisdom, chaps. 7 and 8.

[726] Ecclus. 24: 1–47.

[727] The Book of Job (19: 21–27) also shows us, that about the time of Solomon, the hope of seeing an all-powerful redeemer had penetrated even into the pagan world.

[728] Is. 2: 2–4; 4: 2–6; 30: 18–26; 32: 1–8, 15–20; 35: 1–10; 44: 1–5; 60; 65: 12–25,

There is another very striking general idea. Previous to the Exile, for many reasons the mass of Israel had become very guilty in the sight of its God and had deserved grave chastisement. However, the Lord will deign to spare it partly. A "remnant," less sinful than the rest, will escape the afflictions arising from the divine wrath and will be reserved to constitute a new people worthy of the Messias.[729] This idea shows forth not only the Lord's mercy, but also the irrevocable nature of His plan regarding man's salvation. Nothing will be able to obstruct the carrying out of His providential designs. The royal race of David will also receive its share of punishment, which it deserved only too well, and when the Messias comes, it will be like unto a root out of a thirsty ground;[730] but Christ will reëstablish it.[731]

A third general idea, a natural corollary to the second, is that of the futility of enterprises undertaken by pagan empires to wipe out the theocratic nation before it fulfils its mission. Yahweh will use them as terrible scourges with which to strike His rebellious children; but them, too, He will crush when they try to overstep their rôle and to destroy those whom they were summoned merely to punish.[732]

As for particular features in the life of the Messias, these abound in the writings of the prophets of Israel. There is nothing noble or glorious that they have not said of Him. "One of them sees Bethlehem, the smallest city of Juda, made illustrious by his birth, raised still higher; he sees another nativity through which the Messias comes forth from all eternity from the bosom of His Father;[733] another sees the

etc. See also Jer. 23:1–8; 33:14–26; Ezech. 34:26–31; Osee 14:5–9; Amos 9:13 f.; Sophonias 3:9–20, etc.

[729] Is. 4:3; 29:17–24; Micheas 2:12 f., etc.

[730] Is. 53:2.

[731] Osee 3:4 f.; Amos 9:10–14, etc.

[732] Dan. 2:31–45; 7:1–27. The books of the prophets Nahum and Habacuc are devoted wholly to this idea.

[733] Micheas 5:2.

virginity of His mother [734] . . . Still another sees Him enter His temple; [735] and another sees Him glorious in His sepulcher, where He vanquishes death.[736] While proclaiming His glories, they are by no means silent on the reproaches He will suffer. They see Him sold; they know the number and the use made of the thirty pieces of silver which was the price paid for Him [737] . . . To leave nothing wanting in these prophecies, they reckon the years to His coming.[738] Except by becoming blind, there is no way for one to fail in recognizing Him." [739]

It is easy to supplement Bossuet's enumeration at this point. In the books of the Major and Minor Prophets, we also find allusions, either direct or merely typical, to the Messias' precursor,[740] to the Holy Family's flight into Egypt,[741] to Christ's coming to the Temple in Jerusalem,[742] to His priestly dignity,[743] to His title of Son of Man,[744] which He used so often, to His triumphal entry into the Holy City,[745] to His miracles and His exquisite gentleness,[746] to His Passion,[747] His Resurrection,[748] the Holy Eucharist,[749] the Holy Ghost,[750] the con-

[734] Is. 7:14. We have commented on this prophecy at length in our *Essais d'Exégèse,* 1884, pp. 1–99.
[735] Mal. 3:1.
[736] Is. 53:9.
[737] Zach. 11:12 f.
[738] Dan. 9:20–27.
[739] Bossuet, *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle,* Part II, chap. 4.
[740] Is. 40:3 f.; Mal. 3:1; 4:5 f.
[741] Osee 11:1.
[742] Aggeus 2:7–10.
[743] Zach. 6:12 f.
[744] Dan. 7:13.
[745] Zach. 9:9.
[746] Is. 35:5; 42:1–3.
[747] Zach. 12:9–14; 13:7.
[748] Jonas 2:1; cfr. Matt. 12:40 and 16:4.
[749] Mal. 1:10 f.
[750] Joel 2:28 f.

version of all nations,[751] the obduracy of the Jews,[752] to the Christ as Comforter and Redeemer,[753] to the last judgment at which the Messias will preside at the end of time.[754]

In this brilliant constellation of prophets, Isaias has won special renown, for none other has sung the praises of the Christ in so sublime a fashion, none has more minutely described His Person and His works, the glorious or the sorrowful details of His life. Thus the holy Fathers were wont to look upon him as the Evangelist of the Old Testament.[755] To the few general or particular features that we have already taken from the great number of his prophecies, it is right that we should add, to throw them into more prominent relief, those concerning the divine nature of the Messias. It is affirmed in most forceful terms in the little "Book of the Emmanuel," [756] more particularly in the touching passage where the prophet, after foretelling that the Messias will be born of a virgin, says, in contemplating Him in His crib: "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace." [757] Further on, in the second part of his writing, [758] which has been called "a preface to the Gospel and, as it were, the dawn of its brilliant light," [759] he draws a marvelous portrait of the "Servant of Jehovah," who is none other than the Messias. He relates His

[751] Is. 2:1–4.

[752] Is. 6:8–10.

[753] Is. 61:1–3; cfr. Luke 4:18 f.

[754] Joel 2:30–32.

[755] St. Jerome, *Praef. ad Paul. et Eustoch.*, in his commentary on Isaias; St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII, xxix, 1.

[756] This name is given to chapters 7-12, in which Emmanuel, the son of the Virgin, is the chief figure.

[757] Is. 9:6.

[758] Chaps. 40–64.

[759] Le Hir, *Les Trois Grands Prophètes: Isaie, Jérémie, Ezéchiel*, 1877, p. 135.

glories in a style overflowing with holy enthusiasm; but he also paints an incomparable picture,[760] recalling the twenty-first Psalm (Hebrew 22), another portrait that calls forth tears, that of the "Man of Sorrows," the Christ who becomes our ransom, dying after unspeakable suffering to expiate the sins of men.

Jeremias intermingles with his plaintive elegies some vibrant notes of joy. The idea one should take from him is that of the New Covenant, everlasting and far more perfect than the old, which God will enter into with His regenerated people.[761] The Messias will be its Mediator. The description which Ezechiel, toward the end of his book,[762] devotes to the new theocracy, the new Temple at Jerusalem, and the new worship, fits only the days of Christ.

Though very imperfect, this list suffices to show how rich the Old Testament writings are in the matter of Messianic treasures. The Redeemer's gentle and majestic figure appears throughout. It enters into their very texture; it permeates, so to speak, the whole history of Israel, while waiting for the appointed time to permeate the history of the world.

We have only one more word to add. In these numerous oracles, the progress of revelation is wonderfully accentuated. The Holy Spirit has only gradually, little by little, called forth that majestic figure that rises before us ever more lifelike as it more nearly approaches "the fulness of time," the hour when the prophecies must needs be fulfilled. Nearly every prophet adds some new feature. When the last of them withdraws, the picture is perfect and the likeness so exact that to behold the person there represented will be sufficient at once to

[760] Is. 52:13–53:12. It is a truly "golden passional," from which the Evangelists draw extensively to show that Christ fulfilled all its details. Cfr. Matt. 8:17; 26:63; Mark 9:11; 15:28; Luke 4:17–21; 22:37; 23:34; John 12:38; Acts 8:32; Rom. 10:16; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:22–24, etc.

[761] Jer. 31:22.

[762] Ezech. chaps. 40–48.

prompt the cry: "It is He! Here is that Christ whose features animate and fill the whole Old Testament." [763] We shall see what use the Evangelists make of these abundant treasures and with what exactness they apply these oracles to Jesus.

[763] After the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:1–11), the holy Fathers have often and quite rightly seen in many incidents and personages of Jewish history, as also in the sacrifices and ceremonies of public worship, etc., figures prophetical of the Messias' life and attributes. But we do not consider it incumbent on us to enter into these details here. Notwithstanding the keen interest which they arouse, it cannot be said that,—apart from a few of them, such as the episode of Jonas and of the Paschal lamb,—they have a probative force comparable to that of the Messianic prophecies properly so called.—On the treatment accorded all these great oracles by Rationalism, see Appendix VIII.

PART III

PART III

The Infancy and Hidden Life of the Savior

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel Accounts

Before entering more deeply into the great theme of these narratives, it will be advantageous to study them briefly in themselves. After enumerating the facts of which they are composed, we will endeavor to determine the probable order of events and the nature of the documents from which they have been taken.

I. Short Summary of the Facts: Their Probable Arrangement

All that the canonical Gospels relate on the subject of the Savior's infancy and hidden life is contained in four chapters, of which the two earliest—rather short ones—are the work of St. Matthew; the other two, more fully developed, belong to St. Luke.[764] St. Matthew relates the miraculous conception of the Messias, the virginal marriage of Mary and Joseph, the visit of the Magi, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, the slaughter of the Innocents, the return from exile and the settling at Nazareth. St. Luke, with greater completeness, prefaces the annunciation to Mary by the promise made to Zachary of a son who will be the precursor of the Christ. Then he sets forth successively Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the nativity of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, the adoration of the shepherds, the circumcision of Jesus, His

[764] To be more exact, we should say that the accounts of the holy Infancy are made up only of Matt. 1:18–2:23, and Luke 1:5–2:52.

presentation in the Temple, and the return of the Holy Family to Nazareth. Finally, between two statements declaring the Divine Child's physical, mental, and moral development, he relates, as an example of that development and as a transition to the public life, the episode of the "finding" of Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem.[765]

This brief exposition at once places in sufficiently sharp relief the differences that exist between the two accounts and the considerable gaps which they present. The following comparative table will exhibit still more directly the special part of each of the sacred writers.

ST. MATTHEW	ST. LUKE
	1. The angel Gabriel announces to Zachary the approaching birth of the precursor 1: 5–25
1. An angel announces to Joseph the Messias' miraculous conception ..1: 18–25	2. He announces to Mary that she will miraculously become the mother of the Messias 1: 26–38
	3. The Blessed Virgin visits Elizabeth 1: 39–56
	4. Birth and circumcision of the precursor and his life in the wilderness 1: 57–80
2. *Jesus is born at Bethlehem* 2: 1	5. *Jesus is born at Bethlehem* 2: 1–7
	6. The shepherds, informed by the angels, come to adore Him 2: 8–20

[765] We might add that, in the First Gospel, the genealogy of Christ comes before the accounts of the Infancy (Matt. 1: 1–17), while in the Third Gospel (Luke 3: 23–38), it follows them.

7. He is circumcised..2:21
8. His presentation in the Temple and Mary's Purification 2:22–38

3. The wise men come to adore Him 2:1–12
4. The flight into Egypt 2:13–15
5. The slaughter of the Innocents 2:16–18
6. *The Holy Family settles at Nazareth* 2:19–23

9. *Return of the Holy Family to Nazareth.* 2:39–40
10. The episode of the finding of Jesus in the Temple 2:41–50
11. His mental and moral growth 2:51–52

In appearance the narratives are in entire accord only on two points: the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem and the settling of the Holy Family at Nazareth after the first episodes of the Savior's infancy. However, from a closer study of them it is easily noted that, although each has its own important particulars, they meet on five essential facts: (1) the absolutely supernatural character of Mary's conception; [766] (2) the place [767] and (3) the period [768] of Christ's birth; (4) the office of Messias attributed in advance to Mary's Son; [769] (5) Christ's royal descent.[770]

As for the gaps in the two narratives, they are no less striking than their differences. St. Matthew mentions only

[766] Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:34 f.
[767] Bethlehem: Matt. 2:1–8, 16; Luke 2:1–17.
[768] The reign of Herod the Great: Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:5, 26; 2:1.
[769] Matt. 1:21–23; Luke 1:31–33; 76–79.
[770] Matt. 1:1, 6, 17; Luke 1:32; 2:4; 3:31.

indirectly the capital fact of all, that of the birth of Christ.[771] In short, his account may be summed up in two incidents: the appearance of an angel to reassure Joseph on the subject of the pregnancy of his betrothed wife,[772] and the Magi's visit with its more or less proximate results.[773] Although we owe to St. Luke so many beautiful details of Christ's childhood, yet he passes over in silence,—as we see by comparing his account with that of the First Gospel,—several very important events. It is clear that neither the one nor the other of these Evangelists undertook to record all the facts. They relate only a limited number, by which the divine action is manifested, during the mysterious period of the hidden life, to prepare the way of salvation which the Messias was bringing to mankind. Nevertheless, by combining their accounts we learn enough, if not to gratify our pious curiosity, at least to admire, with a sense of thankful adoration, the manner in which the Lord Jesus made His entrance into this world, the way He was received by a few privileged souls, and the way He prepared for His mission of Savior. We shall have to repeat more than once that none of the four Evangelists intended to write a biography, strictly so called, of our Lord; the only aim they had was to set forth the Gospel of Christ, each according to his special plan, as explained above.

We just stated that there exists a real divergence between the facts composing the Gospel narratives devoted to the infancy and childhood of Christ. As might be expected, it created serious difficulties, as soon as men tried to ascertain the chronological order of events. Without detailing the discussions that have taken place on this point and the hypoth-

[771] He merely mentions it twice (1:25 and 2:1), incidentally.
[772] Matt. 1:18–25.
[773] Matt. 2:1–23.

eses which have been devised to solve this little problem,[774] we will content ourselves with pointing out the attempt at reconciliation which seems the most natural and logical and which is also the most generally accepted.

If the reader will refer to the table printed above, he will readily be convinced that there is agreement for the events previous to the birth of Christ. In fact, for that period, St. Matthew relates only one single incident (the angel's explanation to Joseph of Mary's miraculous conception), an incident which has its evident place following the first chapter of St. Luke.

The difficulty becomes greater when we try to coördinate and bring into agreement with one another the episodes that follow the Savior's birth. Yet, on close examination, we notice at first that, in the case of both Evangelists, the accounts open and close in the same manner: Christmas is their common starting-point and the settling of the Holy Family at Nazareth serves as the conclusion. Following that is a more important observation:[775] in the First as also in the Third Gospel, the events narrated form a group, we might perhaps more correctly say a block, of which it is scarcely possible to disjoin and cut up the parts. Whence it follows that the most likely order of events seems to be this: Jesus is born at Bethlehem according to both accounts; He is circumcised on the eighth day and is presented in the Temple, as St. Luke relates; then, following St. Matthew's narrative, the Magi come to adore the Divine Infant, and the Holy Family flees into Egypt to escape the dangers that threaten from King Herod, who has the Holy Innocents pitilessly slaughtered; Joseph, informed by an angel, returns to Pales-

[774] See Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc*, pp. 81 f.; K. Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse der vier Evangelien*, 1843, pp. 150–159.

[775] We request the reader to refer again to the synopsis on page 228 sq. See also our *Synopsis Evangelica*, pp. 3–8.

tine and definitely settles at Nazareth with the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus.

II. The General and Special Character of the Gospel Accounts

Taken as a whole, the pages which the two sacred writers devote to Christ's childhood constitute a little collection of unequalled delicacy and grandeur, which one never tires of admiring.

Looked at from the viewpoint of their contents, they beautifully set forth that prelude of a thoroughly divine history, for they allow us to contemplate in Jesus as an infant, as a boy, and as one reaching the mature age of man's estate, the Messias promised by the prophets of old, preparing Himself for the work of saving the world. From the time He lay in the crib, He appears to us, on the one hand, as the Son of God, to whom the angels and a few privileged souls are happy to pay their homage of adoration and love; on the other hand, as the Son of Man, humbling Himself, obeying, and devoting Himself to the sacrifice. Such He is as we contemplate Him in the stable of Bethlehem, in the Temple at Jerusalem, at Nazareth, such we shall see Him all through His public life, on Calvary, and in the glorious mysteries of His Resurrection and Ascension. The fruit will be all that the flower promised.

If this touching prelude is an indication of the future, we can say with no less correctness that it closely connects the New Testament with the Old, the Church of Jesus with the Jewish theocracy. It is within the Temple, during one of the most solemn ceremonies of public worship, that the Gospel begins. John the Baptist, the last and most august representative of the old Synagogue, the future precursor, inaugurates the new era. Almost as soon as He is born, the infant God is

incorporated in the people of Israel by circumcision, and Jewish shepherds are His first adorers. The accounts of the infancy are, therefore, a connecting link between the two divine covenants.

Let us enter still further into the events, that we may become better acquainted with the character of each of the two Gospel accounts. From the viewpoint of the contents, we see that each of the authors remains faithful to his personal plan and general tendency. St. Matthew, who is a Jew writing for Jews, at the very outset shows us in Jesus the Son *par excellence* of David and Abraham, the sovereign King of Israel, the Messias, who, from His very entry into this world, fulfils the prophetic oracles.[776] St. Luke, a Greek addressing himself to Greeks, a disciple and friend of St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, chooses to present Jesus as a Son of Adam, as the Brother of all men, as the Redeemer of the whole world. Such is the general idea that distinguishes their narratives regarding the Divine Infant.

Nevertheless, at times we unexpectedly see them change places, as it were. St. Matthew's account becomes universal, whereas that of St. Luke becomes, in a way, Jewish. Thus, at first, it is in the former Gospel that we would expect to meet the episodes about the precursor, the circumcision and the ransoming of Jesus, and Mary's Purification, since these incidents are specifically Jewish; however, it is St. Luke who records them for us. Likewise it would seem that the adoration of the Magi ought more naturally to find a place in the Third Gospel, since those holy persons represent the first-fruits of the Gentile world coming to the Redeemer's crib; but it is in the First Gospel that we read the account of them. This sort of transposition is a manifest proof of the loyalty of the two Evangelists. In telling the story of the infancy of Jesus they were guided by no dogmatic tendency, although

[776] Matt. 1 : 22 f.; 2 : 4–6, 15, 17 f., 23.

that has many a time been asserted, but simply set down the facts such as they knew them.

There is another important remark that has been often repeated in connection with the contents of these two groups of narratives. In the Gospel of St. Matthew all the events gravitate, as it were, about St. Joseph; in that of St. Luke, Mary is the center no less than Jesus. It is an easy matter to demonstrate both of these assertions. According to St. Matthew, Joseph is the one to whom the angel announces the approaching birth of the Savior, whose virgin mother is Mary. He it is who, as head of the Holy Family, receives the order to take the Divine Infant as promptly as possible to Egypt, in order to rescue Him from the snares of Herod. Once the danger is past, again it is to him the order is given to bring Jesus back to Palestine. According to St. Luke, on the contrary, all the events seem to converge about the mother of Christ. It is she who takes the principal part in the mysteries of the Annunciation, the Visitation, Christmas, the Purification in the Temple, the finding of the Child Jesus. At every moment the sacred writer places before our eyes her sweet presence, which we never tire of contemplating, and he is at particular pains to set down her acts, words, and very thoughts. Presently we shall have occasion to draw a conclusion from this double observation.

In the accounts of the infancy, the form is constantly befitting the contents, rich and exalted. The events are told with a noble grace and in a fresh and candid simplicity that adds to their charm. The cleverest artist would have been unable to do better. Each individual scene is recounted in the terms that best correspond to its nature.[777] The tragic and the idyllic are associated in the most impressive fashion.

[777] The rationalist exegetes, who—as we shall set forth later on (see Appendix IX)—eliminate with an almost brutal hand these charming scenes on the pretext that they are merely legends or symbols, are nevertheless forced to admire the grave and unstudied beauty of the accounts.

Here, as in the rest of his Gospel, St. Matthew, considered as a writer, is more popular and less ornate than St. Luke. And yet his narrative is not devoid of a certain art; nay, it has even been said to contain "a powerful coloring." [778] Thus it is that in a few words he portrays St. Joseph's distress. The same may be said of his wonderful description of St. Joseph's perfect and silent obedience to the divine orders that required such great sacrifices of him. His brief picture of the slaughter of the innocent victims of Bethlehem is truly life-like and dramatic.[779]

St. Luke's narrative is especially touching. A rather ancient tradition, which in all likelihood is nothing more than a pious legend, represents him to be a painter as well as a writer, and attributes to him portraits of Jesus and of Mary.[780] This much at least is certain: not only is he the real historiographer of Christ's infancy, but his description of it is an ideal picture whose every trait enraptures the mind and heart.[781] His style, like the facts themselves, is

[778] A Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* II, 368.

[779] It is impossible to understand how Usener, in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica,* III, 334, can affirm that St. Matthew's data on the Infancy are "vague and uncertain." Loisy does not hesitate to repeat this false assertion (*Évangiles Synoptiques,* II, 331).

[780] See what is said *infra* regarding the Savior's physical likeness. Father Faber (*Bethlehem,* pp. 238–244) makes a whole series of charming reflections on this subject.

[781] Not long ago Fairbairn, an Anglican theologian of weight, developed this thought in words as true as they are eloquent: "Our narratives are pure as the air that floats above the eternal hills; are full, too, of an idyllic sweetness. . . . The lone, lovely, glad yet care-burdened mother; the holy, beautiful Child, bringing such unsearchable wealth of truth and peace to men; the meanness of His birthplace, the greatness of His mission; the heedless busy world unconscious of the new conscious life that has come to change and bless it; the shepherds under the silent stars, watching and watched; the angel-choir, whose song breaks the silence of earth with the music of heaven; the wretched and merciless Herod, growing in cruelty as he grows nearer death, a contrast to the gentle Infant who comes with 'peace and good-will towards men'; the Magi, wanderers from the distant East in search of light and hope: and round and through all the presence in angel and dream, in event and word, of the Eternal God who loves the fallen, and begins in humanity a work of salvation and renewal—these all together make,

"that of a peaceful idyl." [782] And yet he has recourse to no literary artifice to produce that effect. A great part of his charm as a writer lies in his very simplicity.[783]

Under such conditions it is not surprising that, from the earliest years of the Church, Christian art has striven, with legitimate perseverance, to reproduce all the mysteries and phases of Luke's blessed story. In the catacombs it began the creation of those paintings and sculptures, now fresh and naïve, now angelically pious, now ideally beautiful, which by the hundreds and thousands adorn our churches and museums and private collections. No part of Christ's life has inspired so many artistic masterpieces; but let us add that none of these masterpieces excels the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke in grace and beauty.

III. Special Sources from Which the Accounts of the Infancy Were Derived

In what way did our two Evangelists come into possession of the remarkable accounts that we have just summed up and appraised? This is not an idle question. In fact, the events that make up these narratives form a class apart, of a very special and intimate character. They made very little stir about them and even such as a few privileged souls were allowed to know at first hand, attained only a restricted and not very lasting publicity. And some of those events, such as Mary's virginal conception and the divinity of her Child, remained secret for long years. It is, then, easy to understand

when read in the letter, but interpreted by the spirit, a matchless picture of earthly beauty and pathos illumined and sublimed by heavenly love." (*Studies in the Life of Christ,* 13th ed., 1904, pp. 31 f.)

[782] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 382.

[783] "Everything here breathes a divine sublimity, which, however, shows itself in a human simplicity." (Scholten, *Das paulinische Evangelium,* pp. 295 f.). We shall soon have occasion to consider the style of the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel from another angle.

that the Evangelists who relate them had need of particular documents. Nor is there any doubt as to the existence of such sources.[784] The discussion bears only on their nature and worth.

In the absence of any positive data on the subject, a great deal of imagination has been expended in the endeavor to discover and even to supply them. Every possible hypothesis has been suggested. There has been talk of an oral tradition, of a document or several documents in writing, and even of both these sources together. Nor is that all. The proponents of a written source are at odds when the question arises as to the language in which it was written. It was Hebrew, according to some; according to others it was Aramaic; a Greek translation from the Hebrew or Aramaic, according to a third opinion. Whole volumes have been published on this interesting but quite secondary question, on which no satisfactory conclusion will ever be reached.[785]

Instead of being guided by preconceived ideas, as many have in this matter, let us take up the accounts themselves and see whether they offer any light on the point in question.

St. Matthew gives us no direct information as to the source from which he derived the story of the infancy. But it is evident that the genealogical list with which his Gospel opens is derived from an official document. We can say the same of the list which St. Luke inserts between his account of the Savior's hidden and public life.[786] It is possible, then, that both writers had some documents before them for the incidents of the divine infancy. St. Luke, moreover, formally announces to his readers that he made careful inquiries about the Savior's history before relating it himself, and that he took the greatest pains in consulting both oral and

[784] Except in the minds of a few critics, who suppose that St. Matthew and St. Luke, particularly the latter, invented it all.

[785] See Appendix IX, sec. 1.

[786] Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38.

written tradition.[787] This remark, which bears on his entire Gospel, evidently concerns first of all the episodes of the infancy.

We have called attention to a remarkable phenomenon that appears in our two Gospel narratives. That of St. Matthew, we said, was composed from the point of view of St. Joseph, that of St. Luke from the viewpoint of the mother of Jesus. On this double circumstance, might we not be allowed to rest a hypothesis as to the sources for which we are looking and to say that, directly or indirectly, it is above all to St. Joseph and Mary, who took so great a part in the mysteries of our Lord's hidden life, and to the members of their family, that the two historiographers of that life owe their remarkable knowledge of it? Numerous authors,—Catholic, Protestant, and even Rationalist—justly suppose it.[788] Evidently it is only a conjecture; but it is a quite likely one, especially as regards the Blessed Virgin.

Note the insistence with which, on two different occasions, St. Luke remarks that the mother of Christ, enraptured by the repeated wonders that she witnessed during her Son's childhood, "kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."[789] Might we not say that St. Luke thus tacitly con-

[787] Luke 1: 1–4.

[788] Suffice it to name a few. Among Catholic writers: J. E. Belser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 1901. pp. 186 f.; F. Kaulen, *Einleitung in die heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments,* 1876, p. 426; P. Schanz, *Kommentar über das Evangelium des heiliges Lukas,* 1883, pp. 10 f. Among Protestants: W. M. Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 2d ed., pp. 73–92; W. Sanday, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible,* II, 643 f.; F. Godet, *Introduction au Nouveau Testament,* II, 475 f., and *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., I, 106 f.; Th. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 2d ed., II, 406. Among Rationalists: Resch, *Das Kindheitsevangelium,* pp. 323 f.

[789] Luke 2: 19, 51. "From Luke 2: 19 and 51, it follows that the accounts must be considered as communications from Mary." Harnack, *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte,* p. 109. Yet Harnack does not always agree with the accounts.

nects his whole narrative with her? Besides, Mary was the only one who personally knew many of the principal facts of the holy infancy; the others she learned through her cousin Elizabeth, St. Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi. What little of these events at first came to be known, was soon forgotten; but after Our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension His mother communicated her secrets to the first Christians, with whom she lived in close relations.[790] Was it granted to St. Luke to see her and question her personally, or were the incidents of the holy childhood told him by the Savior's "brothers," that is, His cousins, among whom were the Apostles St. James the Less and St. Jude? Or did Luke find the story of those events in some ancient document whose author could not be named? In any case, in the last analysis the communication of these facts goes back to Mary and thereby they enjoy the highest authority. We are less well informed regarding the source from which St. Matthew derived his information; but it is probable that he also had recourse to family traditions, taken from separate documents. This would explain the difference between the two accounts.

An obvious circumstance leads one to suppose that at least St. Luke made use of a written source, the original text of which was Aramaic. After the elegantly balanced period, in pure Greek, which opens his account,[791] the style abruptly changes, up to the end of the second chapter, and becomes laden with Aramaicisms, the while keeping a certain number of peculiarities characteristic of the author of the Third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles. This Oriental flavor in the diction, in the pages recounting Jewish facts, is an additional charm to that of the events themselves. St. Luke was, then,

[790] Cfr. Acts 1 : 14.
[791] Luke 1 : 1–4.

pleased to incorporate largely in his account the document he had before him, subjecting it only to slight modifications.

This is the opinion which to-day seems to prevail regarding the sources of the narratives of the infancy.[792]

[792] See Appendix IX, sec. 2.

BOOK I

The Holy Infancy

The following lines contain an exact summary of the history of Christ's infancy: "It developed by preference in three directions. It describes the preliminary signs and the Nativity. It sets forth the homage paid to the Newborn. It relates the wonderful deliverance of the Infant God." [793] St. Matthew and St. Luke, in a certain sense, shared between them these precious items of information; but the account of the deliverance is proper to the First Gospel.

[793] Th. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, I, 362.

CHAPTER I

The Two Annunciations

1. The Angel Gabriel Announces to Zachary the Birth of a Son, Who Will Be the Precursor of the Messias

THE Gospel story opens at Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish theocracy, in the interior of the Temple, that is, in the very palace of Yahweh, and during one of the most solemn ceremonies of sacred worship. No theater in the world could have been more fitting for this glorious opening, uniting, as it did, in so intimate a manner the great drama of the Old Covenant with the still greater drama of the New.

It was the hour for the sacrifice which was called "everlasting" because it was offered twice every day in the name of the whole people: in the morning at the third hour, and in the evening at the ninth.[794]

We do not know for certain whether the episode related by St. Luke took place in the morning or in the evening, as there is no indication in his narrative; perhaps the morning should be preferred, since the perpetual sacrifice then took on a more imposing character.[795] At the break of day, the first appearance of which was officially announced by a priest stationed on the highest pinnacle of the sacred edifice, a lively animation reigned in the upper court of the Temple, in making the preparations for this ceremony. The priests on duty for that

[794] That is, at 9 o'clock in the morning and at 3 in the afternoon.

[795] Some authors choose the evening hour of sacrifice because that was the time when the angel Gabriel had appeared to Daniel and foretold to him the date of the Messias' coming. (Cfr. Dan. 9: 20 f.)

day,—about fifty in number,[796]—met in the hall called Gazzith and there, to prevent competition or arbitrary choice, it was decided by lot what office each of them should perform. The Talmud supplies us with interesting details on this distribution of functions. The master of ceremonies, after his colleagues had ranged themselves in a circle around him, selected some number, as twelve, twenty-five, thirty-two. He then by chance removed one of the priests' head-dress, thus designating the one with whom he would start to count; and he then counted around the circle until he reached the number previously determined. The priest to whom this number corresponded was thereby selected for the ceremony in question.[797]

The morning sacrifice, as also that of the evening, was made up of two distinct parts. One part, the more material, consisted in slaying the victim, a young lamb, and in placing its various members one by one on the altar of holocausts, the brazier of which had been carefully freed from its ashes and provided with fresh fuel.[798] The other part of the ceremony was more mystical and was called the incensing; it took place in the interior of the Holy Place,[799] on the golden altar, which was used exclusively for this symbolic rite, the most sublime of all those performed by simple priests, and consequently the most desired. That a greater number of pious desires might be satisfied, it was regulated that this function should be performed by the same priest only once during his whole life. Exception was made for the case, evidently very rare,[800] when

[796] According to the calculations of Edersheim, a former rabbi (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,* I, 134). On the Sabbath the number of priests was much larger.

[797] In some districts, children use a similar method to decide which of them will take such or such a part in certain games.

[798] The wood of the fig tree was preferred as a fuel, because it made excellent embers.

[799] See page 168.

[800] It has been reckoned that in our Savior's time the number of priests was about 20,000.

all the sacred ministers present on that day should already have had the honor of burning the incense on the golden altar.

The officiating priest to whom this function had fallen was accompanied by two assistants, chosen by himself. One of these carried a golden receptacle, filled with the precious incense whose composition God Himself had long ago indicated to Moses;[801] the other also carried a golden vessel, in which he put live coals, taken from the altar of holocausts. At the moment they left the Priests' Court to enter the sanctuary proper, they struck a sonorous instrument, called *magrephah.* At this signal all the priests and Levites on duty hastened to take their assigned places; the faithful, whom the morning and evening sacrifice always attracted in large numbers, prostrated themselves silently in the courts of the Israelites and of the women. It was a moment of profound religious expectancy. However, one of the two assistants removed the ashes and dead coals that remained on the grate of the altar from the last incensing; then he adored the divine presence and withdrew, walking out backwards. The other placed on this same grate the live coals that he was carrying, and he in turn adored and withdrew. The officiating priest, now alone in the Holy Place, waited in suspense for another signal that indicated the precise moment when he should pour a previously determined amount of incense on the little brazier of the golden altar.[802] It is to this solemn moment that St. John alludes in his Apocalypse: "And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a

[801] Ex. 30: 34–38. It was a mixture composed of equal portions of storax, onycha, galbanum, and gum resin from a species of tree called *Boswellia sacra.* These ingredients, to which the rabbis added several others, formed an exquisite mixture.

[802] For ampler details, see Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc,* pp. 33 f.; Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in Luc.,* I, 8–10, and especially Edersheim, *The Temple, its Ministry and its Services,* pp. 124–244; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 4th ed., II, 451 f.

golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel." [803] This beautiful ceremony of incensing was, therefore, a figure of Israel's adorations and prayers ascending to God.[804]

The awaited signal was given by the master of ceremonies. The officiating priest then carefully poured on the brazier the incense which one of his assistants had placed in his hands; this done, he made a profound adoration, left the interior of the sanctuary, and went to take his place at the entrance of the stairs leading from the vestibule to the Priests' Court. Those of his colleagues who were on duty that day gathered about him. Then another sacred minister, likewise chosen by lot, placed on the altar of holocausts one by one the bleeding members of the slain lamb. The priestly trumpets loudly and joyously broke forth; the Levites intoned the psalm of the day, accompanied by musical instruments. Such were the chief rites of the everlasting sacrifice, intended to establish unbroken relations between the theocratic nation and its God.

With the Evangelist St. Luke, let us pass to more concrete details. The priest who that day took so august a part in the sanctuary was named Zachary. He belonged to the "ephemeria" [805] of Abia, so called in memory of its first chief: this was the eighth of twenty-four sacerdotal classes that David had long ago established to regulate the service of divine worship and the better to partition the numerous functions.[806] It

[803] Apoc. 8: 3 f.

[804] Cfr. Ps. 140: 2.

[805] This is the word which the Evangelist uses here: ἐφημερία, *i. e.*, class. Josephus likewise alludes to the existence of these sacerdotal classes in our Lord's time. Cfr. *Ant.*, VII, iii, 7.

[806] 1 Par. chap. 24.

was so arranged that each of these classes should in turn pass one week in the Temple precincts, from one Sabbath to the next. This was not burdensome, as it meant scarcely a fortnight's duty each year. But at the periods of the great religious feasts, the needs of divine worship called for the presence of nearly the whole number of priests.

Zachary many years before had married Elizabeth, who like him belonged to the priestly race, since she "was of the daughters of Aaron." [807] To be the daughter of a priest and the wife of a priest was regarded among the Jews as a double honor; so it is not unintentionally that the Evangelist mentions this detail. The future precursor will, then, have the advantage of being connected, through both father and mother, with the family of Aaron, which was at that time the noblest of Israel after that of David, from which was to be born the Messias. Elizabeth was also, although in what degree we know not, a relative of the Blessed Virgin.[808]

She and her husband possessed a nobility far higher than that of blood and rank: the nobility of a sincere and solid virtue. "They were both just before God," who reads the inmost depths of heart and conscience, and they walked "in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame." [809]

It would have been hard for St. Luke to find a happier and more theocratic expression than to say that the two holy spouses belonged in the category of chosen souls whose pious, pure, detached, charitable life drew down Heaven's favor on the whole nation. Though the eyes of the Most High looked

[807] The priests were allowed to marry a woman from any of the tribes of Israel, provided she was of good repute.

[808] Luke 1:36. Συγγενίς, is a somewhat vague expression, as is *cognata* in the Vulgate.

[809] It is hardly possible to determine the precise distinction which the sacred writer has in mind here, between the expressions ἐντολαί and δικαιώματα. The former seems to be more general, while the latter designates the multitude of particular precepts which every faithful Israelite was required to follow.

down upon them with complacence, their union had not received that special blessing which the Hebrew poets describe in such expressive terms: "[The Lord] maketh a barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of children . . .[810] Behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: The reward, the fruit of the womb. As arrows in the hand of the mighty, so the children of them that have been shaken. Blessed is the man that hath filled his desire with them." [811]

This sweet joy was lacking at the fireside of Zachary and Elizabeth, and she had been grievously saddened by it. Throughout the Biblical East, and especially among the Jews,[812] barrenness was looked upon as a humiliation, at times even as a mark of Heaven's disfavor. Disappointed in the past, the venerable priest and his wife could no longer count on the future, for "they both were well advanced in years," and it would require a miracle to give them a son. But this is just what God is going to perform, under conditions that will show forth His goodness no less than His power, and in a way to bless the whole theocratic nation and the entire world, as well as a privileged family of Israel.

We left Zachary alone within the Holy Place. Clothed in a white linen tunic completely covering his body and gathered in at the waist by a party-colored girdle, his head covered according to custom, his feet bare out of respect for the holiness of the place, he was still standing not far from the thick and richly embroidered veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, before the golden altar on which he had just poured the precious incense.[813] To his right,—at the left of the altar, at the north side,—was the table of the loaves of proposition; to his left,—at the right of the altar, at the

[810] Ps. 112:9.

[811] Ps. 126:3 f.; cfr. Ps. 127:1, 3.

[812] Cfr. Luke 1:25; Gen. 16:4; 20:18; 29:32; 30:23; Is. 54:1; Osee 9:14, etc.

[813] This altar, which is described in Exodus 30:1–10, was only one cubit (about

south side,—was the seven-branched golden candlestick.[814] Zachary was about to prostrate himself and withdraw from the sanctuary, when a marvelous sight stopped him. "There appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense," consequently between the altar and the golden candlestick. It was not difficult for Zachary to understand that he was in the presence of a heavenly spirit, for no mortal could then be in the sanctuary and, since the days of Abraham, angels had played so frequent and important a part in Israelitic history that their intervention, though always unusual, contained nothing beyond the reason of a pious Jew, much less that of a holy priest. Nevertheless, in the presence of this sudden supernatural apparition, Zachary was troubled, as many others before and since have been in similar circumstances.[815]

The angel briefly reassured him: "Fear not, Zachary." He delivered to him the divine message, which consisted of a glorious promise, developed in three gradations: God is going to give you a son; this son will be endowed with eminent qualities; he will become the precursor of the Messias. "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: and thou shalt rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers

20 inches) wide and two cubits (about 40 inches) high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with plates of gold. The upper part of it was provided with a little elevation to prevent the coals and incense from falling.

[814] See Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible*, pl. XCVI, fig. 2; pl. CIII, fig. 11; pl. CIV, figs. 2, 3, 6.

[815] Dan. 8:17 f.; Acts 10:4, etc.

unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."

Let us study these words, so precise, so worthy of God and of His Messianic plan. "Thy prayer is heard." This prayer to which the angel refers, Zachary had offered to the Lord with the smoke and fragrance of the incense. It would seem at first sight,—and such is the opinion of a considerable number of commentators,—that its principal object was the birth of a son, that he had implored so long with a great yearning. But does he not himself presently seem to contradict this interpretation by countering the angelic promise with the natural impossibility of such a request being fulfilled? It is probably a grace of a loftier and more general order, that he had besought with his whole soul, in the name of all his people, as whose representative he then stood before the golden altar; the grace which the prophet Isaias so nobly expresses in words as earnest as they are poetic:

"Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.
Let the earth be opened, and bud forth a savior, and let justice spring up together." [816]

The angel's first words would therefore mean: The Messias will soon make His appearance. The words, "thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son," establish a close connection between that happy event and the child whose birth is promised to Zachary, so that his two wishes will be fulfilled at the same time.

Wonderful things are foretold with regard to this child of blessing. His parents are to give him the significant name of John (*i. e.*, "Jehovah is favorable"),[817] the meaning of which

[816] Is. 45:8. Such was the thought of St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, the Venerable Bede, etc. *"Pro adventu Messiae deprecabatur,"* says St. Augustine, *De Quæstion. Evangel.*, II, 1, and *Serm. in Nativit. Ioan. Bapt.*, 291.

[817] In Greek, Ἰωάννης, according to the spelling usually employed by the ancient

he will carry out to the full, for glorious hopes are connected with his person, his holy life, his particular mission. He will be a cause of great rejoicing, not only for his parents, but for numberless souls. Like Samson and Samuel of old,[818] who were also blessed at their birth, John will have to prepare for his office by a life of penitence. According to the technical expression current among the ancient Hebrews, he will be, at least partially, a *nazir* and, as such, will abstain from all fermented drink.[819] But that will be only one particular feature of his harsh mortifications, which the Evangelists forcefully describe later on.[820]

But in the Holy Spirit he will have a sanctifier as powerful as fasting and penance. This Divine Spirit will take possession of him even before his birth,[821] in order to prepare him to become the worthy precursor of the Messias. This future office of John is set forth as clearly as possible by the rest of the angel's words, which are taken largely from two oracles of the prophet Malachias: [822] "Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord, whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple [823] . . . Behold I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers

manuscripts; whence the Latin *Ioannes*. More exactly Ἰωάνης, according to the Hebrew form of the name *Yohanan* or *Yehohanan* (the second *h* represents the Hebrew *heth*, a guttural to which nothing in our language corresponds; it is equivalent to the German *ch*).

[818] Judges 13:5; 1 Kings 1:11.

[819] Num. 6:1–4. Besides observing this abstinence, the true *nazir* had to let his hair grow during the whole period of his vow. Cfr. Num. 6:5, 18; Acts 18:18; 21:23 f.

[820] Matt. 3:4; 11:18; Mark 1:6; Luke 1:80; 7:33.

[821] This is the meaning of the words ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας, as appears from Luke 1:41, 44. Several Latin manuscripts, as also St. Ambrose, translate the Greek by *in ventre* or *in utero*.

[822] They probably date from the year 433 B. C.

[823] Mal. 3:1; cfr. Is. 40:3.

to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." [824] It is by virtue of the second of these predictions that our Savior's contemporaries, as we note in numerous passages of the Gospels [825] and of the Talmud, expected to see the prophet Elias emerge from his mysterious retreat to become the herald and precursor of the Messias. One day, when questioned about this point by some of His intimate Apostles, Jesus enunciated a distinction between His first and second coming, which perfectly settled the matter.[826]

Provided with the spirit and power of Elias, John will succeed in rebuilding the moral unity that had partly vanished between the ancient times and the new times, between the patriarchs and their sons, many of whom had sadly degenerated.[827] Thus he will prepare for the Messias a perfect people, worthy of Him and His wonderful blessings.

These words opened up bright prospects for all Israel, and especially for the promised son of Zachary. We may conceive what must have been the surprise and joy of the venerable priest. What happiness unhoped for and now so near they proclaimed for him! But, in one of those sudden reflections that sometimes come to disturb the best hopes, he wondered if he might truly count on the birth of a son. Beset with doubt, he protested to the heavenly messenger his advanced age and that of Elizabeth, and asked him for a sign that would guarantee the truth of the promise. His request received an immediate answer. The angel replied: "I am Gabriel, who stand before God; and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings." [828] Such were, so to speak, his credentials. His

[824] Mal. 4:5 f.

[825] Matt. 11:14; 16:14; 17:10–12; 27:47; Mark 11:9–13; Luke 9:8, 19; John 1:21.

[826] Matt. 7:9–13; Mark 9:10–12.

[827] This, we think, is the best interpretation of the words: "He shall turn . . ." See our commentary on St. Luke's Gospel, p. 57.

[828] At this point in the Greek we read the verb εὐαγγελιζέσθαι, *evangelizare*, a

name itself was a sign. Zachary knew from the Jewish annals that Gabriel was one of the heavenly spirits of the highest order,[829] and that, several centuries before, he had been chosen by God to announce to the prophet Daniel the date of the Redeemer's coming.[830] What admirable sequence there is in God's plans! It is this same angel who will again come, with a proposal to Mary that she become the mother of the Messias.[831] Hence Gabriel has quite justly been called the Angel of the Incarnation.

The divine messenger then granted Zachary the sign requested, but at the same time announced a punishment: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time." Other personages of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Gedeon, and Ezechias,[832] had asked a sign under similar circumstances without incurring any punishment. Why, then, is Zachary treated so severely? It is because the angel, in showing that he read the priest's heart, since he knew the object of his interior prayer, was by that fact accredited as God's envoy. He deserved to have his words taken;[833] it is Zachary's doubt, not his request, that was punished.

The priest officiating at the ceremony of the incensing was

word of which St. Luke is very fond. He uses it about ten times in his Gospel and fifteen times in the Acts of the Apostles.

[829] Probably one of the seven higher angels who are mentioned in Tobias 12:15 and the Apocalypse 1:4; 4:5; 8:2. Elsewhere in the Bible also the angels are represented as standing in the posture of devoted servants, ever ready to carry out the orders of God, their Master. Cfr. Job 1:6; 2:1; Apoc. 7:11.

[830] Dan. 8:16; 9:20–27.

[831] Luke 1:26–38. "When we see the angel Gabriel sent," says Bossuet, "we should expect some news about the coming of the Messias." (*Élévations sur les Mystères,* 12th week, 1st elevation.)

[832] Gen. 15:8; Judges 6:36–40; 4 Kings 20:8.

[833] Further, as we said above, the external circumstances were such that Zachary could have in front of him only a heavenly spirit.

urgently admonished not to delay in the sanctuary. Now, as a longer time than usual had passed since the signal given by the master of ceremonies, the looks of all present were turned in amazement and anxiety towards the entrance to the Holy Place, veiled by the rich curtain that separated it from the vestibule. At length Zachary was seen to come out and to approach the stairs that led to the Priests' Court. This was the spot where, with his fellow-priests grouped about him, he should bless the people, by extending his arms and pronouncing the beautiful formula in use since the time of Aaron.[834] He made an effort to speak; but no sound came from his lips, and it was then understood, from his repeated signs [835] and from the emotion written on his face, that he had just witnessed some extraordinary phenomenon. They even surmised, quite correctly, that he had had a miraculous vision, so accustomed were they, from reading the national and sacred history, to divine interventions, especially within the Temple.

The priests of the class of Abia, after finishing their week of duty, were replaced by another class, and Zachary returned to his home,[836] located in the mountains of Juda, some distance from Jerusalem. The fulfilment of the first part of the divine promise was not long delayed, for Elizabeth knew that within a short time she would be a mother. We may easily surmise her happiness; but at first she kept her joy in silence. For five months,—until her pregnancy became evident and, according to the Gospel narrative, until Mary's visit,—she kept herself hid within doors, saying: "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he hath had regard to take away

[834] Num. 6:24–26. The others present responded: *Amen.*

[835] The expression which the Evangelist uses, ἦν διανεύων, Luke 1:22 (Vulg., *erat innuens*), clearly indicates this repetition of gestures.

[836] In the time of Josue (Josue 21:1–40) forty-eight cities or towns, scattered through the whole land of Palestine, had been assigned to the priests and Levites as dwelling places. We will presently endeavor to determine that in which Zachary lived.

my reproach among men." This life of pious retreat is explained, on the one hand, as Origen and St. Ambrose remark, by a natural feeling of modesty in a woman becoming a mother at so advanced an age;[837] on the other hand, by a wish the better to testify her gratitude to God in prayer and recollection. Henceforth, not only will Elizabeth's opprobrium be ended, but, in the history of the Redemption, she will hold a place of honor that will never be taken away from her.

II. The Angel Gabriel Announces to Mary that She Has Been Chosen to Become the Mother of the Messias

If John the Baptist's birth may be compared, in a certain sense, to that of Isaac and several other personages of Jewish history, the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ has only one parallel,—namely, the creation of Adam. And is not Christ, according to St. Paul's glorious teaching,[838] the second Adam, infinitely higher than the first? As the first man came immediately from the hands of the Creator, so the Messias, the Son of God, will make His entry into this world in a manner altogether marvelous. According to the divine plan, it was necessary that He should belong to the race of those whom He was coming to save. But a supreme fittingness required that the close bond which He was to contract with men be not formed according to the ordinary laws of nature. The uncreated Wisdom will solve this problem by a worthy procedure. A woman will give birth to the Christ without ceasing to be a virgin. Thus the head of the new humanity will be really united by flesh and blood to those whom He came to regenerate, and yet, in this regard also, He will preserve His superiority to them, thanks to a unique privilege.

Such is the general theme of the glorious account that we

[837] It had been so in the case of Sara (Gen. 18:12).
[838] Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45–49.

are about to approach under the guidance of St. Luke. "There are two ways to recount great events. The first consists in raising oneself as far as possible to their height, in taking on an imposing, a sublime style. The second, which is often the better when there is a question of divine mysteries, contents itself with a very simple setting forth of the events, leaving it to them to establish their own worth. The Evangelist here adopts this latter method. What could be simpler, more delicate, more virginal than his account of the Incarnation of the Word?" [839]

The seventy "weeks" which the angel Gabriel had long before predicted to Daniel [840] have now passed. After preluding, during the final period of the Old Testament, and just now at Jerusalem on the threshold of the New, his great mission of to-day, behold him become, in a complete and immediate manner, the messenger of redemption. As kings of the earth send in solemn state their most trustworthy ministers to propose, on their behalf, to some glorious princess a union that will be the acme of their longings, so, using a comparison which many of the Fathers employ with utmost respect, the Lord God chose His archangel to convey heavenly proposals to a Jewish maiden, the object of His divine complacence, and to contract an incomparable engagement with her in His name.[841]

Six months have elapsed since the future precursor's conception. The sacred narrative suddenly transports us from Judea to Galilee, that province so despised by the rabbis; from Jerusalem to an insignificant town, whose name is mentioned neither in the Old Testament writings nor in those of the historian Josephus, although the latter enumerates so large a

[839] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc*, p. 40.

[840] Dan. 9: 24–27.

[841] St. Gregory Thaumaturgus expresses the same idea when he writes: "Gabriel was sent to contract espousals between earth and heaven." Hence the title of *pronubus*, which the ancients sometimes give to the angel Gabriel.

number of Galilean localities; from the inner court of the Temple to a humble and modest chamber that is about to serve as a theater for the greatest mystery in the history of the world, where the chosen one of God was perhaps even then in fervent prayer.

The town was called Nazareth,[842] and the maiden's name was Mary.[843] Neither St. Luke nor St. Matthew pauses to give us, on the previous life of this blessed virgin, the information which our filial piety would so gladly welcome. Both of them limit themselves [844] to mentioning the fact that, at the time when she received the angel's visit, she was betrothed to one of her countrymen named Joseph, who, in consequence of the vicissitudes of the times, was only a lowly artisan, but who belonged to the royal race of David, from which she, too, was sprung.[845]

[842] We shall describe it later. The Greek manuscripts are not uniform in spelling this word, to which they give as many as four forms: *ναζαρέθ*, *ναζαρέτ*, *ναζαρά*, and *ναζαράθ*. But the last two forms are very rare (*ναζαρά*, Matt. 4:13 and Luke 4:16). The best critics hesitate between "Nazareth" and "Nazaret." Tischendorf, in the eighth edition of his Greek New Testament, adopts the spelling *Ναζαρέθ*, which has prevailed in the different European languages.

[843] In the Massoretic Hebrew text, *Miriam* (it was the name of the sister of Moses and Aaron; Ex. 15:20). The Greek text of the Gospels has, like the Septuagint, sometimes *Μαρίαμ*, which approaches closer to the Hebrew, sometimes *Μαρία*. Josephus uses the forms *Μαριάμμη*, *Μαριάμη*, and *Μαριάμνη*. The meaning of this name, so dear to Catholic hearts, is unfortunately doubtful. In his book on Hebrew names, St. Jerome mentions four interpretations: *illuminatrix mea, illuminans nos, smyrna* (*i. e., myrrha*) *maris, stilla* (not *stella*) *maris;* he adds as a fifth, *amarum mare.* According to another translation, which is connected with the Aramaic idiom, "Maria" means *domina.* Bardenhewer, in his learned monograph, *Der Name Maria,* 1895, notes as many as fifty different interpretations, which were furnished him by 120 authors. He adopts the opinion according to which *Miriam* means *pinguis,* and consequently *venusta,* beautiful, graceful, in conformity with Oriental esthetics. See also Knabenbauer, *Evangelium secundum Lucam,* 2d ed., pp. 47 f.

[844] Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:27.

[845] Do the words *ἐξ οἴκου Δαυείδ*, "of the house of David," refer solely to *Ἰωσηφ* or solely to *παρθένον*, "virgin," or to both? This cannot be determined with certainty, and exegetes disagree on this point. It is certain, according to Luke 1:32 and 69, that the Evangelist attributes a royal descent to Mary and the earliest doctors—Ignatius of Antioch, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian—testify to the same

"The angel entered," says the Greek text, and at once saluted Mary with deep respect, using the ancient Oriental formula, "Peace to thee!" which is still the practice among Jews or Arabs.[846] Then in a few words of singular force, he indicated to what a degree the august virgin was already favored by God: "[Thou art] full of grace,[847] the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." [848] But Heaven had in reserve for her a privilege that explains and marvelously surpassed all the favors of the past.

The angel's words of praise greatly troubled [849] Mary. The humble maiden was perplexed and wondered what might be the aim and purport of such a salutation. The heavenly messenger made haste to reassure her, describing, in solemn language befitting the subject, the sublime part she was called upon to take in the work of Redemption. Calling her by name, with mingled familiarity and kindliness, he said to her: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou

fact. Furthermore, for Jesus to be the "Son of David" in a strict sense, for the royal blood really to flow in His veins, it was necessary that His mother be personally descended from the family of that ruler, because He had no father according to the flesh. See Appendix X.

[846] In Hebrew *Sālōm lâk.* Cfr. 2 Kings 18:28; 1 Par. 12:18, in the original text. See also Luke 10:5; 24:36; John 20:19, 26, etc. St. Luke translates this expression by χαίρε, and the Latin translator has used the Roman equivalent *Ave.* As this last word, written backwards, forms the name *Eva,* the Latin Fathers have elaborated ingenious contrasts between Eve and Mary, between the latter's obedience and humility and the former's pride and disobedience.

[847] In Greek, κεχαριτωμένη, "who has received grace," very abundantly. And so the Vulgate translation, *gratia plena,* which agrees with the Syriac, is fundamentally correct. As this epithet refers to Mary's whole preceding life, the legitimate deduction is drawn that the future mother of Christ was conceived without sin. See Knabenbauer, *i. h. l.;* Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae,* 5th ed., I, 592 f.

[848] It is not sure that this last clause is authentic in this passage, because it is absent from important Greek manuscripts. It may perhaps have been taken from Luke 1:42.

[849] Greek, διεταράχθη. According to a reading sanctioned by several manuscripts, but far from being certain, because it has against it other very early witnesses, the chief reason for this trouble of mind was the sight of the angel, who appeared in human form (ἰδοῦσα, "having seen").

shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever."

As we wrote in another place,[850] "For any Jew familiar, as Mary was, with the Old Testament oracles, these words were as clear as day, for they contained a popular description of the Messias, a résumé of the most famous Messianic prophecies. The Child that the angel promised to Mary was to possess all the titles and to fulfil all the ministries attributed by God and public opinion to the impatiently awaited liberator. This portrait bore too striking a likeness not to be at once recognized, and the Blessed Virgin could not have understood better, had Gabriel confined himself to saying: 'God destines you to become the mother of Christ.' "

The first words evidently alluded to one of the most beautiful oracles of Isaias: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." [851] The next words: "He shall be called the Son of the Most High," were shortly to receive their authentic interpretation from the angel's mouth.[852] As to the reëstablishment of the throne of David by the Messias, the universal extension and everlasting duration of His realm reconstituted on new foundations,—all this was a theme, starting with Nathan's prophecy,[853] to which the ancient prophets, the Targums and the Talmud, the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, and even the Evan-

[850] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc,* p. 43.

[851] Is. 7:14. See our *Essais d'Exégèse,* 1884, pp. 1–99.

[852] The words "He shall be called" amount to saying: Not only will He be the Son of the Most High, but He will be recognized and treated as such. The expression "Most High," (Greek *ὑψίστος*) is equivalent to the Hebrew *Eliyōn.* It appears often in the Bible, to express the greatness of God. Cfr. Gen. 14:18; Ps. 7:18; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28; Acts 7:48; Heb. 7:1, etc.

[853] 2 Kings 7:12 f. This thought is magnificently developed in Ps. 88:20–38.

gelists never tired of reverting.[854] The patriarch Jacob had long ago announced the glorious reign of the future Redeemer.[855]

Into the midst of these brilliant promises, the angel inserted an order from Heaven in relation to the name that Mary was to give her Son: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." This name, "which is above all names," [856] which the Apostles were so happy to reveal to the world and which recurs so often in their writings,[857] this name which the martyrs uttered with love on their way to execution, which fills Christian souls with valor and consolation, and which terrifies demons and puts them to flight, was by its meaning worthy of Him who was to render it forever illustrious. The heavenly spirit who soon after came to reassure Joseph, fixed its meaning with exactness: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." [858] For Him alone this name, therefore, signifies in brief compass the grace of salvation of which the Messias was the bearer for all humanity.[859] It was, however, not a new name, for several personages of Jewish antiquity,—some famous, like Josue and the author of Ecclesiasticus; [860] the others unknown [861]—had borne it. But He alone, the "true Savior," was to realize its meaning to the full.

To become the mother of the Messias! Any other Jewish maiden would certainly have accepted this distinguished honor

[854] Cfr. Is. 9:7; Jer. 30:9; Ezech. 17:22; 34:13; Dan. 7:13; Osee 3:5; Amos 9:11–14; Micheas 4:7 f.; 4 Esdras 12:32; Ps. Solom. 17:23 f.; Mark 11:10; Acts 1:6, etc.

[855] Gen. 49:10.

[856] Phil. 2:9.

[857] Occurs almost 250 times in St. Paul's Epistles.

[858] Matt. 1:21.

[859] Its full Hebrew form is *Jehoshuah,* "Jehovah saves"; it was shortened to *Jeshuah,* which the Greek made into Ἰησοῦς, and the Latins, *Iesus.*

[860] The Septuagint and the Vulgate sometimes called them "Jesus."

[861] According to Col. 4:11, one of St. Paul's companions was called "Jesus the Just." We also find a Jesus in the list of Christ's ancestors cited by St. Luke, 3:29.

without the slightest hesitation, with inexpressible joy. Mary's heart must have thrilled with joy when she comprehended the divine proposal. And yet this most prudent Virgin, instead of giving her consent at once, thought it behooved her to ask the angel for an explanation: "How shall this be done?" Then, to justify her question, she adds: "Because I know not man." In fact, the angel's language, while very clear in its *ensemble* and while alluding to the prophecy of the virgin-mother,[862] had not explained the wonderful manner of the privilege offered to Mary. She was not certain that the birth of the Child would be absolutely supernatural. But she had a very legitimate and grave reason for questioning the heavenly messenger on this point, and that reason is contained in the words, "I know not man." Inasmuch as, in the very first lines of the account, Mary is presented to us as the betrothed wife of Joseph, these words can, in all reason, have only one sense: they conclusively suppose that, under the inspiration of Heaven and in agreement with St. Joseph, Mary had consecrated her virginity to God by an irrevocable vow. Otherwise her question would be meaningless. "Why should she ask with astonishment how she was to become a mother, if she married like others, to have children?" [863] Since the time of the Fathers, such has always been the Catholic interpretation of these words, that contain the touching avowal of an ideally pure soul.[864]

The angel Gabriel hastens to furnish the enlightenment that Mary requested. After the manner of the Hebrews in solemn circumstances, he does so in rhythmic, cadenced language, of great power and delicate beauty: [865]

[862] Is. 7 : 14.

[863] Calmet, *Commentaire Littéral* on Luke 1 : 34.

[864] See Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Evang. Lucae,* pp. 71 f.; O. Bardenhewer, *Mariä Verkündigung,* pp. 120–134; and *infra,* Appendix XIII.

[865] In the preceding portion of his message, we find a parallelism of the parts, which is one of the distinctive marks of Hebrew poetry.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,
And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee;
And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee
Shall be called the Son of God."

That clearly signifies: This Child will be born in a manner altogether supernatural. The Holy Ghost Himself will perform this prodigy, in which the flesh will have no part. It is, therefore, not from any corrupt or vitiated source, but from an absolutely pure source, that will come the germ of life which will enable Mary to become a mother while preserving her virginity. The first two propositions parallel each other and mutually supplement each other. The second refers to the creative force displayed by the Spirit of God at the time of creation,[866] and also to the mysterious cloud which, during Israel's long wandering through the desert of Pharan, symbolized and manifested the divine presence, and rested upon the Ark of the Covenant as upon a throne.[867] The angel could not have indicated to Mary in more exact and discreet terms the mode of her maternity, which absolutely excluded all human coöperation. But it is not in vain that he represented the Messias' birth as a manifestation of the power of the Most High, for the mystery of the Incarnation, the union of the Word with human nature, was the manifestation of an incomparable, absolutely divine power.

The third proposition, "Therefore also the Holy . . . ," draws the patent conclusion from the two preceding propositions. Conceived through the operation of the Holy Ghost, the Son of Mary will necessarily be an altogether holy Being;[868] and besides, He will also be God, and recognized as such, since that Spirit is God.

[866] Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 32:6; 103:29 f.
[867] Ex. 40:32–36. See also 3 Kings 8:8–10.
[868] "A holy thing," according to the literal translation of the Greek text (ἅγιον, in the neuter).

The Messias will at times be given the name of "Son of God" in a broad sense; but, according to the context, it is evident that here this title must be interpreted in the strictest and most absolute sense. There is a manifest and continual gradation in the angel's message. Then, too, we shall hear God the Father Himself attribute this title to Jesus at the solemn hour of His Baptism [869] and during His Transfiguration.[870] On two occasions [871] St. Peter, divinely enlightened, will also acknowledge Jesus as the true Son of God. From her beginning, the Church has employed this name and has forever settled its meaning, to express briefly and forcefully her faith in the divine nature of her Lord and Founder.[872]

Since it is under such conditions that Mary is to become a mother, she can accept Heaven's proposal unhesitatingly. Her vow will not be infringed upon, and, as the chant of the Church expresses it, she will unite on her brow the two most august crowns: that of maternal dignity and that of virginal purity (*"gaudia matris habens cum virginitatis honore."*)

Not having doubted the angel's words for a single moment, she did not ask for any sign or guaranty of his mission. But he spontaneously offers an undeniable proof of his truthfulness. It consists of a circumstantial announcement of another marvelous birth, although of a very different order, which would precede that of the Messias: "Behold thy cousin Elizabeth,[873] she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this

[869] Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

[870] Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:6; Luke 9:35.

[871] John 6:70; Matt. 16:16.

[872] John 11:27; 20:31; Rom. 1:4, etc.

[873] On the basis of this detail it is sometimes affirmed that the Blessed Virgin belonged, not to the tribe of Juda, but to that of Levi, since, as St. Luke informs us, Elizabeth "was of the daughters of Aaron." This inference is groundless. To explain the relationship of Mary and Elizabeth it is, in fact, sufficient that their mothers or grandmothers should have married, the one a member of the tribe of Juda, the other a member of the priestly family. The apocryphal book

is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God." The Lord is almighty! The angel could not close his message more effectively than by this incontestable principle, with which, as with their supreme cause, he connects the two miraculous births.

Gabriel's mission is ended. He is now silent and waits for Mary's reply in an attitude of profound respect. The proposal which God deigned to make to the virgin of Nazareth by His messenger was not, on His part, a command that had to be accepted absolutely. Even for a rôle so lofty, the Most High would not compel the will of His creature. This is why the angel waits. What a solemn moment! The world from its creation had never known the like. As St. Augustine declares with eloquent piety: "O blessed Mary, the entire world enslaved [by Satan], awaits your consent. Virgin, delay not. Make haste to answer the messenger [from Heaven.]" [874]

Reassured, Mary gives her consent in words which are as simple as they are sublime: "Behold the handmaid [875] of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." This is the language of faith, of obedience ready for any sacrifice, of unconditional compliance. Is it not the essential function of a slave to do his master's bidding in all things?

Mary, therefore, offers herself entirely and with her whole soul to coöperate with the Creator's glorious work. It is likely that she foresaw grievous suffering, especially the suspicions that would encompass her, foremost on the part of her husband, without her being able to defend herself against them except by protests which it would be hard to get believed. Yet

known as *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* ("Testament of Simeon," VII), without any reason supposes that the Messias must belong both to the tribe of Juda and to that of Levi. Cfr. Fabricius, *Codex Pseudepigr.*, II, 42; Kautsch, *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, II, 465.

[874] *Serm.*, XVII, *De Tempore.* Cfr. St. Bernard, *Serm.*, IV, *sup. Missus*, and Faber, *Bethlehem*, pp. 74 f.

[875] Literally, according to the Greek text, "the slave," δούλη.

her acceptance was unconditional; she left everything to Providence, by uttering her generous *"Fiat."*

"And the angel departed from her." With this quiet remark closes the account of a delightful scene of capital importance for the salvation of mankind; an account, "so chastely beautiful," [876] which has been rightly praised for its fine qualities.[877] It is hardly doubtful,—such, following the Fathers, is the general opinion of Catholic theologians,[878]—but that the adorable mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished as soon as Gabriel departed. *"Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis."* [879] What a mystery of boundless love and unspeakable abjection, of deepest wisdom and infinite power, confounding the pride of the Jews and the sensuality of the pagans, but provoking the admiration of the blessed spirits, who call aloud to each of us: *"Sic nos amantem quis non redamaret?"* As for Mary's beauty and nobility of character, they are above all praise. Is not the Mother of Christ, so far at least as was compatible with a creature, at the height of incomparable dignity? As has been said, "What an ideal type of purity, humility, candor, naïve and strong faith!" On the aging tree of Judaism, she appears like a blossom announcing the season of maturity and the divine fruit which that blossom will produce.

[876] B. Weiss, *Leben Jesu,* 4th ed., I, 213.

[877] "What exquisite delicacy in this scene! What simplicity and nobility in the dialogue! Not a word too much, not a word too little. So perfect a narrative could emanate only from the holy sphere in which the mystery was accomplished." Godet, *Comment. sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., I, 117. There is nothing here to gratify idle curiosity. "By frequent transmission from mouth to mouth, details about the angel's outward appearance, his beauty and brightness, and about Mary's attitude and employment, would have crept in, and the conversation would have been expanded." A. Plummer, article "Annunciation," in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ,* I, 75. These clumsy developments are not wanting in the apocryphal Gospels, whereas St. Luke's narrative is truly worthy of an inspired author.

[878] See in particular Suarez, *Comment. in IIIam Part.,* quaest. 30, disput. 9, s. 4, 1.

[879] John 1 : 14.

III. The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

This new account, so perfectly sketched by St. Luke with a few strokes of the pen, is an exquisite connection between the two annunciations and the two miraculous nativities. The privileged women who are soon to become mothers by virtue of a special divine intervention, are presented to us at an intimate meeting, in a tender family scene.

It was not because she doubted the angel's truthfulness, or to gratify a vain curiosity, much less to inform her relative of the signal favor she had received from God, that Mary undertook a long and wearisome journey.[880] In Gabriel's last words, "Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age . . . ," the humble and faithful servant of the Lord had seen an invitation, a suggestion, which it was impossible for her to ignore. "And Mary rising up [881] in those days,[882] went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda."

There can be no doubt as to this region, toward which the mother of God directed her steps. It is that same mountain country which we described above.[883] The Evangelist, however, did not judge it useful to give us any indication as to the location of the home of Zachary and Elizabeth.[884] We are, therefore, reduced to conjecture on this point. Naturally, the

[880] *"Non quasi incredula de oraculo, nec quasi incerta de nuntio, nec quasi dubitans de exemplo, sed quasi laeta pro voto, religiosa pro officio, festina prae gaudio,"* says St. Ambrose, *Exposit. in Luc.*, 1:39.

[881] A Hebrew expression, used elsewhere also by St. Luke, to introduce the fact of a near departure. Cfr. 15:18–20; Acts 10:20; 22:10.

[882] Another Hebraism, indicating a rather short interval, beginning with the day of the Annunciation.

[883] The expression which St. Luke uses here to designate it, *εἰς τὴν ὀρεινὴν* (or *ορίνην*), appears again a little further on in his account (1:65). Pliny the Elder (*Nat. Hist.*, V, 70) likewise mentions it under the name of *Orine*, and therein he places Jerusalem.

[884] *Εἰς πόλιν Ἰούδα*, he says, without using the article, "into a city of Juda," *i. e.*, a city of the ancient tribe of Juda.

first places thought of were the cities of that district which formerly had been assigned to the priests and Levites as places of residence: [885] in particular Hebron, the chief of them, located at the south, twenty miles from Jerusalem; also Juttah, a little town still farther south, that has kept its name down to the present time.[886] A tradition that goes back to some time before the Crusades favors the present village of *Ain-Karim* (the ancient Carem), a little nest of verdure in the depth of a dale cut into the dry massif, about four miles west of Jerusalem, as the bird flies.[887]

The journey undertaken by Mary with such generous zeal lasted not less than three or four days.[888] She made it on foot or seated on a she ass, the popular riding animal of Palestine in ancient times. She probably set out alone, for among the Jews of that period women enjoyed much greater liberty than among other Oriental peoples, or perhaps in the company of a servant, or in a group of Galileans going to Jerusalem. She was clad in the traditional, picturesque costume of her country, a blue dress and red cloak, or a red dress and blue cloak, with a large white veil covering the whole body. After traversing the plain of Esdraelon, she passed over the mountains of Samaria and a considerable part of Judea, before reaching Zachary's home.

[885] Cfr. Josue 21:9–19.

[886] Following Reland (*Palaestina ex Monumentis Veteribus Illustrata,* 1714, II, 78), Patrizi (*De Evangeliis Libri Tres,* Dissert. X, c. 1) and other authors (quite recently Dr. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas,* I, 91–95) have adopted this opinion. But it has no solid foundation, because all the Greek manuscripts and all the versions have the reading Ἰούδα, which in this place can stand for nothing except the tribe of that name. *Jutta,* as the Hebrew calls it (Josue 15:55 and 21:16) is called *Iota* by the Vulgate in the first of these two passages, and *Ieta* in the second; Ἰτάν and Τανό by the Septuagint.

[887] See *La Palestine,* by professors of N.-D. de France à Jérusalem, 2d ed., pp. 315 f. The name *Carem* does not appear in the Hebrew text; it is mentioned only in the Septuagint (Josue 15:59).

[888] Josephus, *Vita,* expressly says that it took three days to go from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Upon crossing the threshold, she "saluted Elizabeth," says the sacred text. Grace was but awaiting this signal to perform a double miracle which shows us the Blessed Virgin under a title dear to Catholics of all times, that of mediatrix of divine blessings. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the infant John leaped in her womb, and she herself was filled with the Holy Ghost, who instantly revealed to her the incomparable favor that had been bestowed on the virgin of Nazareth. Under the impulse of strong emotion which still rings in her rhythmic, broken language, passing rapidly from one idea to another, "she cried out with a loud voice: [889]

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

These are the words of one mother to another, the mother of the precursor to the mother of the Messias. Elizabeth by divine enlightenment knows what occurred between the angel, Mary, and God. This is why she humbles herself before her whom the Word deigned to make His living tabernacle, as John the Baptist later humbled himself before Christ.[890] This is also why she congratulates Mary on being blessed among women, on becoming the mother of her Lord, *i. e.*, of the Redeemer. Elizabeth likewise knows that the leaping of the infant whom she bears in her womb is not one of those natural

[889] Luke 1:42. According to a reading that has very good authority: ἀνεφώνησεν κραυγῇ μεγάλῃ. Moreover, it is by similar phrases that St. Luke is wont to express strong emotions; cfr. 2:10; 4:33; 8:28; 17:15; 19:37; 23:23, 46; 24:52.

[890] Matt. 3:13 f.

movements sometimes occurring during pregnancy, but a supernatural and conscious movement, resulting from the joy which the future precursor, suddenly gifted with reason,[891] experienced at finding himself in the presence of the Incarnate Word. He rose, so to speak, to salute his Master, thus preluding the beautiful rôle he is one day to fill so faithfully. In return, he then received, according to the common opinion of theologians, an extremely precious grace, that of being cleansed from original sin.

Mary in turn, filled with the Spirit of God, which transforms her into a great poet, answers Elizabeth's praise by chanting the *Magnificat,* a canticle sublime in its simplicity. It was the overflowing of her heart, which poured itself forth melodiously at the first occasion that offered.[892] It is a lyric poem of serene and majestic beauty. It transports us to an atmosphere of peace and light, of calm joy and heavenly piety, in which Mary's soul was living since she had become the mother of the Word. Its serenity is in sharp contrast to Elizabeth's ardent words. It is a sort of meditation that Mary here makes, giving free rein to the feelings and impressions that had arisen in her soul. Other women of Israel had from time to time celebrated marvelous events in beautiful canticles. Following Miriam (the sister of Moses), Debora, Anna (the mother of Samuel), and Judith,[893] the Blessed Virgin pays homage to her God in the same form. Her hymn, in which we find all the characteristic elements of Hebrew poetry, and

[891] From Elizabeth's language many Fathers and theologians have quite legitimately concluded that this privilege was then conferred on John the Baptist. Since her infant leaped "with joy," it must be that he was aware of what he was doing. Thus Tertullian (*De Carne Christi, 21*) calls him *"Domini sui conscium infantem."* There is, however, a difference of opinion as to the duration of this favor, which, according to many authors, was merely transitory.

[892] Further on we shall examine the false reading of some Latin manuscripts, *Et ait Elisabeth,* and the curious misuse made of it by the critics in order to attribute the *Magnificat* to the mother of the precursor. (See Appendix XVIII).

[893] Ex. 15:1–21; Judges 5:1–31; 1 Kings 2:1–10; Judith 16:1–21.

which St. Augustine[894] judges worthy of being called *"tympanistria nostra,"* shows a lofty nature, a fine intellect, profound religious feeling, and a very just appreciation of the events of Jewish history to which it refers:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid;
For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

"Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me;
And holy is his name.
And his mercy is from generation unto generation,
To them that fear him.

"He hath showed might in his arm:
He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat,
And hath exalted the humble.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.

"He hath received Israel, his servant,
Being mindful of his mercy:
As he spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever."

The dominant note of this pious and sweet outpouring is that which was then reëchoing so forcibly in Mary's heart: the thought of the grace which God had so prodigally poured out upon the Virgin Mother, upon the humble and lowly in general, upon Israel, His chosen people. This thought is successively developed in four strophes, the first of which expresses Mary's feelings with regard to the immense favor she has just received from Heaven. When she reflects on the infinite mercy with which the Most High deigned to look upon

[894] *Serm.*, XVIII, *de Sanctis.*

her, in spite of her lowly station,[895] to confer on her the highest honor that a simple creature was capable of receiving, her mind and heart,—that is, the inmost powers of her being,—were overwhelmed with thanksgiving and with a desire to glorify her Benefactor to the full extent of her power. She was perfectly aware, under prophetic inspiration, that she, who was so favored by God, was destined to be forever proclaimed blessed. This prediction has been fulfilled to the letter. The praise of the Mother of the Messias, so eloquently begun by Elizabeth, resounded again during Christ's public life,[896] and has never ceased in the Catholic world since the foundation of the Church, as appears from the writings of the Fathers and of a vast number of authors in every Christian century, from the feasts established in her honor, the places of pilgrimage where people go in throngs to venerate her, and the devotions that have been aroused by filial tenderness.[897]

The second strophe accentuates the infinite value of the graces accorded to Mary. They truly merited the name of "great things" and they wonderfully showed forth His three most beautiful attributes: His power, His holiness, and His mercy. And then, it is not only Mary who profits by these heavenly favors; God desires to grant them "from generation unto generation to them that fear Him," that is, to all His faithful servants.

In the third strophe the Mother of Christ generalizes her thought still more and shows by concrete details, taken from the habitual conduct of Providence throughout the ages, the

[895] To translate the word ταπείνωσιν (Vulg., *humilitatem*) in this passage by "humility," gives it an opposite meaning.

[896] Luke 11:27.

[897] Let the Protestants and Rationalists, if they wish, accuse us of adoring the Virgin of Nazareth. They know as well as we do that we adore only God, but venerate with a special sort of worship (*hyperdulia*) the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and look upon her as our own mother. Those only decline to join us in our homage who fail to understand the meaning of these two titles. (Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc*, p. 50). A certain number of Protestants, especially in England, have returned to a better practice in this matter.

divine power and mercy at work protecting the lowly and the oppressed.

Lastly the fourth strophe, returning to the canticle's principal theme, sets forth the special part which the Jewish people are to take in the graces of salvation brought by the Messias. The almighty, the infinitely good God whose praises Mary has sung, is faithful to His promises. What He formerly announced to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then to the prophets coming after them, He has not forgotten for a single moment, but is now going to fulfill, for the age *par excellence,*[898] the epoch of the Messias, has at length opened. It is a cry of lively confidence with which the *Magnificat* closes.

Not the least among the charms of this hymn is that in almost every line it reëchoes the inspired songs of the Old Testament. It draws particularly on the canticle of Anna.[899] But these reminders are not surprising. From early childhood the Jews learned a certain number of Biblical passages by heart. The public reading of the Sacred Books at the synagogue services familiarized them still more with those passages. It was natural, then, that, when Mary's thanksgiving broke out in beautiful transports, the inspired texts should flock to her mind, for her heart and soul were filled with them. Moreover, on her lips these reminders take a personal and original turn. In this canticle, it has been very justly remarked, while the words are drawn partly from the Old Testament, the music is that of the New.

The touching account of the Visitation concludes with a

[898] The words *in saecula* of the Vulgate, which close Mary's canticle, correspond to the Greek *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, *"in saeculum,"* or, according to another reading, *ἕως αἰῶνας*, *"in saecula,"* until the era of the Messias.

[899] 1 Kings 2: 1–10. The most recent commentaries point out verse by verse these various expressions that echo the thought of Anna's canticle or are taken bodily from it. See Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc,* p. 53; A. Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Luke,* pp. 30 f.; Knabenbauer, *Commentar. in Evangel. sec. Lucam,* 2d ed., pp. 92 f.

short chronological note: "Mary abode with her [Elizabeth] about three months; and she returned to her own house." In thus mentioning Mary's departure before relating the birth of the precursor, the Evangelist seems to indicate that the Blessed Virgin had already left for Nazareth when this event occurred. Besides, St. Luke would hardly have failed to name the mother of the Messias as among the persons who came to felicitate Elizabeth after her delivery, if she had been still there.[900] However that may be, blessed was that house where Mary and the Incarnate Word remained for three months, spreading about all sorts of blessings.

[900] The contrary opinion, however, has found many followers since Origen and St. Ambrose. Their view is that it is by way of anticipation, and in order to close the account regarding the Visitation, that St. Luke inserts his chronological note before passing on to another episode.

CHAPTER II

The Two Nativities

I. The Birth and Circumcision of the Precursor

"Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come,[901] and she brought forth a son." The happy mother presently saw herself surrounded by an intimate circle, made up of her friends and neighbors who hastened to felicitate her and to praise the Lord with her; in this unhoped-for birth, it was impossible not to recognize a divine intervention.

In conformity with the Mosaic Law, there was celebrated shortly afterwards in Zachary's house a still greater feast, in honor of the circumcision of the new-born infant. This ceremony took place on the eighth day after the birth;[902] by it every male child of Israel was incorporated in the theocratic alliance and became officially a member of God's people. Thus circumcision was regarded in Jewish families as a sacred event. It had a still holier significance for the son of Zachary and Elizabeth, destined, as he was, to prepare the way for the Messias. This ceremony was not a function reserved to priests: every male Israelite was authorized to perform it, and often it was the child's father himself who did. Nevertheless, as it consisted of a rather delicate physical operation, ordinarily the rôle of *Mohel*[903] was entrusted only to an experienced man. To the religious ceremony was added a joyous

[901] A thoroughly Hebraic expression. It is solemn like the fact which it serves to introduce.

[902] Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3.

[903] This is the Hebrew term for the "circumciser."

family celebration, to which relatives and intimate friends were invited.[904]

According to an ancient custom dating from the time of Abraham,[905] it was on the day of circumcision that the new-born infant received a name,[906] which was usually chosen by the father. In the present case, those present, thinking, no doubt, agreeably to surprise Zachary,[907] assumed the initiative of giving his name to the son of his old age. But Elizabeth, to whom her husband had imparted the details of his vision in writing, voiced an energetic protest. "Not so," she said; "but he shall be called John." To which the over-eager friends replied: "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name." Their objection presupposes that, among the Jews of that time as, for that matter, among most peoples, certain names passed from father to son or from grandfather to grandson and became settled in the family, thus keeping alive the memory of the ancestors.[908] After this repulse on the part of the mother, they betook themselves to Zachary to have him settle the question. They made repeated signs [909] asking him how he would have the child called. Zachary was handed the wax-coated wooden tablet on which, after the manner of the ancients, he used to write with a stylus or steel bodkin,[910] since he had become dumb. Thereon he traced these two words:

[904] On circumcision in ancient and contemporary Judaism, see Léon de Modène, *Cérémonies et Coutumes des Juifs*, Part IV, chap. 8; Coypel, *Le Judaisme, Esquisse de Mœurs Juives*, pp. 96, 102 f.

[905] Gen. 17:5; 21:3 f.

[906] Cfr. Luke 2:21.

[907] Ruth 4:13–17 mentions a like detail.

[908] Cfr. Tobias. 1:1; Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, i, 3; *Bell. Iud.*, V, xii, 2.

[909] From this detail it has often been inferred that Zachary had been stricken deaf as well as dumb. But this opinion is not sufficiently justified. The angel threatened Zachary only with dumbness, and the sacred text, relating his cure, merely says that "his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed." Further, as the dumb make use of signs to express themselves, one is naturally led to speak to them also by means of signs, even when they are not deaf.

[910] See Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible*, pl. LXX, figs. 6, 7, 8. *"Loquitur in stylo, auditur in cera,"* says Tertullian, in speaking of this detail (*De Idol.* 23).

"Iohhanan Chemo (John [is] his name)." For him, as for Elizabeth, the question was not open to discussion; the child's name had been chosen by a higher authority. Those present read this energetic reply, "and they all wondered." Not aware of what had occurred in the sanctuary, they did not understand why father and mother were in accord to derogate from the custom and choose a strange name for their son.

The astonishment was at its height when Zachary by a miracle suddenly recovered the use of speech. "And immediately," says St. Luke, "his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed." Having become dumb because of his lack of faith, he ceases to be so the moment he makes an act of obedience by giving his son the name prescribed by the angel. Consecrating to God the firstfruits of his recovered faculty of speech, thus restored to him after a silence of nine or ten months, "he spoke, blessing God." Thanks to St. Luke, the Evangelist of the sacred canticles, we can still hear, after these long centuries, the principal words of that blessing which came from the lips and heart of the holy priest. In this pious outpouring the sacred writer quite justly sees the result of a divine inspiration, for it is when "filled with the Holy Ghost" that the father utters his prophetic hymn,[911] of which the following is a literal translation:

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
Because he hath visited and redeemed his people:
And hath raised up a mighty Savior[912] to us
In the house of David his servant; as he spoke by the mouth

[911] "And he prophesied," is the formula which St. Luke employs to introduce Zachary's hymn.

[912] Literally, in the Greek text, *horn of salvation.* This metaphor is Hebraic and occurs often in the books of the Old Testament; cfr. 1 Kings 2:10; 2 Kings 22:3; Ps. 74:5, 6, 11, and especially 131:17 ("There will I bring forth a horn to David"). The figure is taken from the strength which lies in the head and horns of certain animals, such as the ox, the wild buffalo, etc.

Of his holy Prophets of old,[913]
That he would deliver us from our enemies
And from the hand of all that hate us,
To exercise his mercy toward our fathers
And to remember his holy covenant,[914]
According to the oath which he swore to Abraham our father,
To grant us this grace,
That being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
We might serve him without fear,
Going in holiness and justice before him,
All the days of our life.

"And thou, little child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest;
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to his people
For the remission of their sins,
Through the bowels of the mercy of our God,
Thanks to which the rising Sun hath visited us from on high,
To enlighten them that have sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death:
To direct our steps into the way of peace."

This is a veritable prophecy. It naturally falls into two distinct parts: in the first there is reference to the Messias and the blessings that His coming will procure for the Jewish people; in the second part Zachary, alluding to the words of the angel Gabriel,[915] sets forth the august rôle that his son will have the honor of filling in connection with the great Liberator. It is a real poem according to the rules of Hebrew versification, but it has a special structure and a somewhat heavy style. Each part is made up of a single sentence, with the propositions connected like the links of a chain. Improvised in

[913] An eloquent appeal to the Messianic oracles, which had so clearly foretold the coming of the Redeemer.

[914] Like Mary, the father of the precursor mentions with deep confidence the solemn pact which God had made with the Patriarchs and the oath by which He had confirmed it. (Cfr. Gen. 22: 16; Ps. 104: 8–10; Heb. 6: 13–18).

[915] Luke 1: 13–17.

a sense, like Mary's canticle, the *Benedictus* was likewise a sudden outburst of feeling that had stirred Zachary's soul for some time. It, too, abounds in passages reminiscent of the Old Testament;[916] which is by no means surprising, since its author was a priest. The *Magnificat* was a monologue by the Blessed Virgin. The father of John, while first of all directly addressing the God of Israel, speaks also for the circle of relatives and friends then gathered about him. In the last lines, his apostrophe to his son is especially moving. Not without good reason does he recommend that his son give to the Jewish people "knowledge of salvation," for the true idea of the deliverance to be brought by the Messias had been sadly falsified and disfigured. The precursor will, then, have to strive against the vain illusions of his fellow-Jews and recall to their minds that the Messianic salvation will not consist in political independence, but in a victory gained over their spiritual enemies, in the forgiveness of their sins, in a sincere reconciliation with God, and in perfect holiness of life. The image of a bright star, which has risen to enlighten our poor darkened earth, is taken from the ancient prophecies.[917] We meet with it again in the Gospel.[918] The canticle comes to a gentle close with the idea of the peace which the Messias will obtain for a troubled world.

Like the *Magnificat,* the *Benedictus* contains an abridgment of the Gospel. Like Mary, so Zachary sums up the salient thoughts of the Old Testament respecting Christ. There is not a word of these canticles but has been fulfilled; hence the Church incorporates them, with the angels' *Gloria in excelsis* and Simeon's *Nunc dimittis,* in her daily liturgy. In truth, they are no less Christian than Jewish. The palpably divine marvels connected with John the Baptist's birth and circum-

[916] See Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke,* pp. 39 f.
[917] Is. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 60:1; Mal. 4:2.
[918] John 1:9; 8:12.

cision produced a very lively impression, not only on those who were immediate witnesses thereto, but over all the countryside, so far as the events became known. They were a frequent topic of conversation. "What an one, think ye, shall this child be?" they asked one another in wonder. And there was reason for building great hopes on him, for believing that he was called to a lofty destiny, because it was evident, as the Evangelist adds, that "the hand of the Lord [*i. e.*, His all-powerful protection] was with him."

St. Luke adds another, no less important reflection on the physical and moral development of the son of Zachary and Elizabeth and on the manner in which he prepared himself for carrying out his mission as precursor: "The child grew [919] and was strengthened in spirit,[920] and was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel." This last feature carries us to John's boyhood and young manhood. At an early age he left his family and withdrew into solitude, far from men, to lead in the company of God alone, a life of silence, mortification, and prayer. Wherever Zachary's home may have been in the mountain country of southern Palestine, it would not be necessary to go far to reach wild, uninhabited places, for the whole eastern district is still occupied by the famous wilderness of Juda,[921] precisely where we find the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry.

II. The Marriage of Mary and Joseph

Here we have another account of wonderful things, set forth [922] with the greatest simplicity by St. Matthew.

[919] This is the physical growth. It took place under excellent conditions, although John was born of parents of advanced years.

[920] This is the mental and moral growth. It, too, was remarkable, under the influence of Heaven's blessing.

[921] We shall describe it later.

[922] Matt. 1 : 18–25.

When Mary left Nazareth after the Annunciation to visit her cousin Elizabeth,—as St. Luke has informed us [923] and as the author of the First Gospel repeats,—she was as yet merely betrothed [924] to Joseph. The betrothal had been contracted according to the usual rites. At the home of Mary's parents, surrounded by guests who were selected from the friends and relatives of the two families and who acted as witnesses, the future husband and wife exchanged their vows. "Behold thou art betrothed to me," Joseph said to Mary, as he handed her a piece of money by way of earnest.[925] The maiden then said: "Behold thou art betrothed to me." Often, too, the engagement was made in writing. Usually a forfeit was fixed upon, which remained in the possession of the bride in case the groom should refuse to keep his promise. Another sum, designated in Hebrew by the name of *Mokar* ("purchase price"), was stipulated in advance between the young man and his future father-in-law, following the Oriental usage that still exists among the Arabs, for the acquisition of the bride and to compensate for the loss of the services which she rendered to her family. But the *Mokar* was not payable until the time of the marriage, which ordinarily did not take place for several months after the betrothal, sometimes not for a whole year.

To make the sequence of the narrative more intelligible, we should add that, according to Jewish legislation, the betrothal established between the bride and groom a legal bond much closer than with us. The engagement thus contracted was hardly less strict and binding than marriage; to break this tie

[923] Luke 1:27.

[924] This is the meaning of the Greek word *μνηστευθείσης*. It is solely for reasons of propriety that early and recent commentators suppose the marriage took place before the Visitation. But St. Matthew's whole account goes against that hypothesis.

[925] A gold coin was the present of the rich; but the smallest coin was considered sufficient.

ordinarily required an official decision, like that which pronounced a divorce. By anticipation, the engaged couple were given the titles of husband and wife, as is done by St. Matthew in the account we are now considering.[926] Their legal status differed so little from that of married persons that a betrothed bride who allowed herself to be seduced was condemned by the Mosaic Law as severely as an unfaithful wife.[927]

Three months had passed since the Incarnation of the Word and the outward signs of Mary's approaching maternity were becoming evident. In relating this fact, the Evangelist, as though unable to allow for a single moment that his readers should entertain an unfavorable suspicion, hastens to remind them that Mary was "with child of the Holy Ghost," conformable to the message of the angel. But Joseph was as yet unaware of the mystery; and so, when he noticed the condition of his betrothed, he found himself in a most distressful situation. He was a "just man," as the sacred writer remarks; that is, he was a strict observer of the divine law, which was his constant rule of conduct.[928] But could a just man marry a woman who, according to appearances, must be guilty of a grave fault? Moreover, had he the right to introduce into the family of David, of which he was the chief representative, an illegitimate child? The Evangelist allows us a discreet and compassionate glimpse of the terrible struggle taking place in that honorable and delicate soul before it succeeded in coming to a definite resolve. Better than anyone else, Joseph knew Mary, her virtues, the purity of her soul and of her life; yet

[926] Matt. 1 : 19, 20, 24. St. Jerome makes note of this fact, in his commentary on the First Gospel: *"Recordare consuetudinem Scripturarum, quod sponsi viri et sponsae vocantur uxores."*

[927] Deut. 22 : 24–27.

[928] Following St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome (*"aequus et benignus"*), various authors give to the word "just" the sense of mild, kindly. But from the Jewish point of view, which is evidently that of St. Matthew, this meaning can here be only secondary.

the plain facts spoke against her.[929] If she had been the victim of some outrage, why had she not informed him of it?

Indeed, at first sight it seems hard to explain the Blessed Virgin's silence toward her betrothed in such grave circumstances. With a single word it would have been easy, so it seems, for her to spare her betrothed and also herself great suffering. But her secret was God's and she thought she ought not to reveal it without His authorization. Her faith and confidence told her, in the depth of her soul, that the Divine Spirit, who had miraculously informed the mother of John the Baptist about the mystery of the Incarnation, would likewise make it known to Joseph in due time. Besides, her virginal modesty made her hesitate to offer an explanation which it was impossible for her to prove.[930]

However, after weighing the pros and cons of the situation, without complaining, without breaking out in violent protests, Joseph reached a decision that does equal honor to his sense of justice and his dignity. There were two ways open to him to break off his engagement: one was rigorous, the other milder. He could summon Mary before the courts to obtain a legal severance of their union and an official document proclaiming the fact; but, to do this he would have to divulge the apparent sin of her whom he had so greatly loved and esteemed and to cover her with shame in the eyes of the entire town.[931] He could also repudiate her without any legal procedure, secretly breaking the bonds; he would thus be doing

[929] The Greek expression ἐν θυμήθεντος well sets forth this cruel and constant preoccupation.

[930] This is what certain Rationalist theologians have been unwilling to understand; they pass a severe judgment on the Blessed Virgin's conduct and even deny the historical character of the events related, on the pretext that "every motive of prudence and honor would have led Mary to notify her betrothed at once." (Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., I, 153 f.) The situation described, however, is quite explicable from a psychological standpoint.

[931] Such is the force of the Greek δειγματίσαι (Vulg., *traducere*); still more strongly expressed in several important manuscripts by παραδειγματίσαι.

all in his power to avoid defaming her, and he would leave the rest to God.[932]

How long did this heart-rending perplexity last?[933] We cannot say. But Providence will take up the work of untying the tragic knot. An angel—perchance Gabriel, according to a not altogether groundless hypothesis—appeared to Mary's betrothed in his sleep and said to him: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins." These few words contained all that was needed to reassure him. By adding the title "son of David" to the familiar and friendly mention of his name, the heavenly messenger indicated to Joseph that the message concerned not only his own person, but also the destinies of his family. Mary's betrothed, therefore, should dismiss from his mind every fear and anxiety with regard to their engagement and should, as soon as possible, contract with her the marriage which they had promised each other. The sequence in the angel's words bears a striking resemblance to that used to inform Mary of her divine maternity: it is the Holy Spirit Himself who formed, in her virginal womb, the Child that was to be born of her and that, as the Messias, was to deliver the Jews, long since called His Chosen People,[934] from all their sins. By thus reconciling them with God, He was fully to

[932] Λάθρα ἀπολυεῖν, *occulte dimittere*. It is by the same verb ἀπολυεῖν that the dissolution of the marriage bond is designated in the Gospels. Cfr. Matt. 5:31 f.; 19:3, 7–9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11 f.; Luke 16:18. This feature confirms what we said above about the likeness of betrothal and marriage among the Jews from the point of view of legality.

[933] The Evangelist by a delicate *nuance* expresses the outcome of this inner strife: μὴ θέλων . . . ἐβουλήθη. The first of these verbs indicates a settled resolve; the second, an inclination of the mind. Joseph had therefore decided to spare Mary and was inclined to dismiss her. It is at the latter step that he hesitates.

[934] It is first of all for the sake of the Jews that God was to send the Messias; cfr. Matt. 10:5 f.; 15:24; John 4:22; Rom. 1:16, etc.

verify the meaning of His beautiful name Jesus, *i. e.,* Savior. Here again we have the Messianic idea in all its purity. Many passages in the ancient oracles had insisted that one of the chief functions of the Christ would be to wipe out the sins of Israel and that justice and holiness would shine with marvelous splendor in His reign.[935]

To the comforting words of the angel, St. Matthew joins one of his favorite reflections by which, forming, so to speak, the philosophy of the history of Jesus, he shows the close relationship between it and the Old Testament prophecies. "Now all this was done," he says, "that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

"All this was done that it might be fulfilled . . ." and *"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet . . ."*: this double formula, which we have already had occasion to mention, recurs so often under St. Matthew's pen that it is proper for us at this point to give a brief explanation of it. Let us first recall the special purpose this Evangelist had in mind. The fundamental thought on which everything else rests, to which everything else in his account leads, is that Jesus realized, trait for trait, the Messianic ideal of the Prophets. Frequently and in a very particular way, Matthew mentions the Old Testament writings to show that in Jesus was fulfilled such or such a prophecy referring to the Messias; and he introduces these oracles precisely by using one of the formulas that we have just quoted.[936] At the basis of the words, *"Hoc totum factum est ut adimpleretur . . ."*, *"Tunc adimpletum est . . ."*, is to be found this implicit reasoning: Prophecy being the word of God Himself and express-

[935] Is. 9:7; 11:5; 18:5; 42:4; 53:4–6; 54:4; Jer. 31:32; Ezech. 36:25 f.; Dan. 9:13; Osee 2:19; 14:5; Mich. 7:18; Soph. 3:13, etc.

[936] Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14, etc. The First Gospel quotes the Old Testament directly no less than forty-three times.

ing His formal will, it is absolutely necessary that it be fulfilled and that its fulfilment correspond exactly to the terms used by the divinely inspired seer. The fulfilment is, therefore, not attributable to blind chance, but to a providential disposition of events. God Himself proposed the oracle; He then arranged events in such wise that their agreement with the prophecy would be perfect.[937] Such was the universal belief of the Jews at the time of Christ, and several incidents in His life prove that He thought the same.[938]

The angel Gabriel had referred to the prophecy of Isaias [939] which St. Matthew quotes according to the Septuagint translation.[940] There has been much discussion, especially in our own day, as to the exact significance of this prophecy and in particular as to the meaning of the word *almah,* which, in the Hebrew text, corresponds to the Latin *virgo.* According to the critics and various other commentators, taken by itself, *almah* does not here designate a virgin in the strict sense. It is true that the Hebrew language had a more characteristic expression, *bethulah,* to signify the idea of virginity in a maiden; but it is no less true that, in the passage of Isaias which we are now considering, the substantive *almah* has precisely this meaning. At least a hundred and fifty years before our era, the Jewish translators whose version is called the Septuagint rendered it by the Greek word παρθένος, which is equivalent to *bethulah.* Hence it follows that even they interpreted this prophecy in the same way as does St. Matthew. Moreover, as St. Jerome remarks,[941] in all the passages of the Bible where

[937] The conjunction ἵνα of the Greek text therefore has the strict meaning of *ita ut,* "so that." It indicates a final end, a clear intention on God's part, and not a simple accommodation originating with the author.

[938] Mat. 13:14; 21:42; 22:41, 45; 26:24, 31, 54; Mark 9:11 f.; 14:21, 27, 49; Luke 4:21; 24:44; John 5:39–46; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12.

[939] Is. 7:14.

[940] With very slight modifications.

[941] In his commentary on Isaias 7:14.

this word occurs, it is always applied to young women who have presumably remained virgins. Isaias himself, in another part of his prophecy,[942] points out two states in which a woman cannot have children: virginal youth, which he designates by the word *'alumim*—closely related to *almah*—and widowhood. It is well to remark also that, in the prophecy quoted by St. Matthew, the prophet does not announce that a maiden who is a virgin will marry later and have a son; that would be nothing extraordinary and would not have constituted for King Achaz, to whom Isaias was then addressing himself, the great sign which God willed to give to that incredulous ruler. The literal translation would be: "Behold the *almah* conceiving and bring forth a son": which means that she will conceive and give birth to him while still remaining a virgin. The article also has its importance in this text. In a way, the prophet points out, in a future which he does not definitely specify, the Virgin *par excellence* who will fulfil his prediction, and he makes not the least reference to a man who would be the child's father. All this is significant and does not allow the oracle to be interpreted in a typical sense. It can apply only to Mary and her Son, the divine "Emmanuel," who, though not bearing that name directly, fulfilled its whole meaning, since He was very literally "God with us." [943]

We trust our readers will excuse these dry details. We deemed it necessary to place in its true light this glorious oracle of the greatest of all Israel's prophets; St. Matthew could not have given a more exact explanation of it.

[942] Is. 54:4.

[943] On Christ's virginal birth, see Appendix XII. A rather large number of orthodox Protestant commentators apply also to Our Lord, in a direct and exclusive manner, the oracle of the *almah*. See C. F. Keil, *Commentar über das Evangelium des Matthäus*, pp. 69–71. In the second century the rabbis, to rid themselves of the objections which Christian apologists drew against them from this prophecy, asserted that the child promised to the *almah* was none other than Ezechias, son of King Achaz. St. Justin plainly reproached them for this (*Dial. cum Tryph.*, 43, 67, 71, 77, etc.) The Jews Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion,

Let us now return to the Gospel narrative. Joseph could rest assured and marry his betrothed bride. She was personally without stain, and the Son to be born of her would be holiness itself. Being a wonderful model of obedience and faith in extremely difficult and delicate circumstances, Joseph submitted without hesitation. He arranged with Mary to hasten the celebration of their chaste nuptials. On the appointed day, at nightfall, accompanied by friends, he went in procession to her parents' house, to conduct her, dressed in her finest clothes, crowned with myrtle, and surrounded by her closest friends, to his own house, by the light of lamps and torches, to the joyous sound of flutes and timbrels. As we said above,[944] this solemn introduction of the bride into the new home which she was to adorn and in which she was to be the queen, was the chief and official marriage ceremony among the Jews.[945] However, as Mary and Joseph were poor, everything was conducted simply. On the other hand, the God who blessed the union of Abraham and Sara, of Isaac and Rebecca, of Jacob and Lia and Rachel, of the young Tobias and another Sara, was invoked with ardent fervor by this couple, who made a common fund of their treasure of virtues and merits and to whom the Word Incarnate would soon be intrusted,

We now come to a more important question, one which the Fathers frequently asked themselves[946] and which they have

when they translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, replaced the word *παρθένος* of the Septuagint by *νέανις*, which simply means any girl or young woman. In our *Essais d'Exégèse* (pp. 1–99) we have explained at considerable length the *almah* prophecy and have endeavored to meet all the difficulties raised by the critics. See also the commentaries of Knabenbauer and Zahn on the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[944] Page 142 sq.

[945] Cfr. Deut. 20:7; 1 Mach. 9:37–41; Matt. 25:1–6. On the complete ceremonial of Jewish weddings, see the curious work of J. Seldon, *Uxor Hebraica absolvens Nuptias, et Divortia Veterum Hebraeorum,* 1712, pp. 92–126; W. Nowack, *Lehrbuch der biblischen Archäologie,* 1894, I, 155–164; Ginsburg and Edersheim, *L'Israélite de la Naissance à la Mort,* French trans., 1896, pp. 147–165.

[946] *E. g.,* St. Ingatius of Antioch and St. Jerome.

answered almost uniformly in the same way. Why did God preferably choose a betrothed maiden, a young woman engaged in the bonds of matrimony, to make her the mother of the Messias? A French theologian not long ago answered this question as follows: "According to the divine plan, the Word made flesh was to be born of a virgin. But this great miracle must not be exposed to the talk of men. The just would believe it on the word of God and on the testimony of a very discreet confidant; it would remain hidden from unbelievers. It was to be kept hidden even from the demons, says a very old tradition . . .[947] Then, too, it was needful that the chosen virgin of God should have a helper and support in this world, to care for her and her Son. During the days of the Messias' nativity, the days of trial, poverty, and even of flight to a distant region, it was fitting that the young mother should have a protector at her side. And it was also fitting that the Child should find beside His crib someone who, in the name of His only and heavenly Father, should take the place of an earthly father, safeguarding Him, laboring for His support, then initiating Him into that life of labor which He was to lead for many long years. Hence it is beneath the veil of marriage that the mystery was going to be accomplished. In that virginal and yet very real union, the two spouses truly gave themselves to each other, but as one would give jewels already consecrated to God, entrusting them to safe hands to have them kept with the utmost respect." [948]

St. Matthew closes the account of this heavenly union with a remark that brings no surprise to the believing soul. Using the manner of speech customary among his race, he says: "Joseph knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn Son." Not only at this period, but throughout the whole duration of their holy marriage, did they live together in the most ab-

[947] St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epist. ad Ephes.*, 19.
[948] R. de la Broise, *La Sainte Vièrge*, 1902, pp. 70 f.

solute chastity. According to the formal teaching of the Catholic Church, a teaching that rests on the unanimous tradition of the early doctors,—Origen, Epiphanius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, Leo, and a hundred others,—Mary did not for a single moment cease to be a virgin. Nothing agrees better with Christian sentiment than this doctrine, which was officially defined by the Second Council of Constantinople (553) and the Second Council of the Lateran (1139).

Do not the words of Joseph's betrothed to the angel Gabriel, "I know not man," show, as we said above, an unshakable resolve on her part, which Joseph had approved and taken together with her? With all the more reason, after coöperating with the Holy Spirit in the generation of the Messias, never would she have consented to have other children, engendered like other men. There would have been an unfitness in that, which the chaste Joseph would have understood no less well than his virgin spouse. David's direct posterity, therefore, did not go beyond Joseph; in Jesus it found its glorious and final crown.[949]

III. Jesus Is Born at Bethlehem: the Shepherds Come to Adore Him

This narrative is no less wonderful than that of the Annunciation. St. Luke[950] tells the story with an amazing simplicity that contrasts with the sublime character of the facts and, in another sense, with the false and ridiculous lucubrations of the apocryphal gospels.

The account opens with a historical and chronological note which the Evangelist intends to serve as a general date to mark the period of the Savior's birth: "It came to pass, that

[949] On the perpetual virginity of the Mother of Jesus, see Appendix XIII.
[950] Luke 2: 1–20.

in those days [951] there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria." In appearance, nothing could be simpler than this statement. Yet it bristles with difficulties and has created an exegetical problem which, even after endless discussions, has not yet received a completely satisfactory solution.[952] Here let us confine ourselves to a rapid comment on the information furnished by St. Luke. It is evident that the Evangelist in writing these lines intended, on the one hand, to explain why Jesus was born at Bethlehem, although His mother and foster-father lived at Nazareth, and, on the other hand, to connect His birth with an event that concerned the whole world.

The census in question,[953] like all undertakings of that sort, consisted in inscribing on the public registers the name, age, occupation, wealth, children, and family heads of a country, most often in view of more or less proximate taxation. The decree issued by Caesar Augustus, the first of the Roman emperors, embraced all territories dependent by any title whatsoever,—whether as Roman provinces, subject kingdoms, or allies,—on the immense and all-powerful Empire, which is what is meant by the hyperbolic expression "the whole world." [954] This census is not mentioned by any other his-

[951] Six months after the birth of St. John the Baptist; cfr. Luke 1:26, 36, 56. It was still "in the days of Herod, the king." Luke 1:5.

[952] See Appendix XV.—A considerable literature has accumulated on this subject. To avoid overloading our narrative, we will later on set forth, first, the principal systems that have been devised to remove, as much as possible, the difficulties of interpretation; secondly, the violent attacks which the Rationalists have directed against the truthfulness of the sacred writers.

[953] In the Greek it is designated by the verb ἀπογράφεσθαι (Vulg., *describeretur*), the direct meaning of which is "to put in writing, to inscribe."

[954] In the Greek text: πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην, γήν or χώραν being understood (Vulg., *universus orbis*). In certain ancient Greek inscriptions the Roman emperors receive the flattering title of κύριος τῆς οἰκουμένης, "master of the inhabited earth." Ptolemy (*Geographia*, II, 1 f.) uses the same term, and Polybius relates (IV, 48) that "in a short space of time the Romans subdued all the inhabited earth." These details show how far St. Luke conformed to the language of the time.

torian of the time; but St. Luke's habitual fidelity is sufficient guaranty of his truthfulness on this point as on all others.

As archæologists, jurists, and historians, distinguished by their writings and knowledge,[955] to-day admit, Augustus was a thoroughly methodical administrator and the compilation of reports and statistical documents formed one of the distinctive traits of his character. The civil wars preceding his coming to the throne brought about great disorder in the administration and in Roman finances. It was natural, therefore, that he should feel the need of reorganizing everything. "Important documents, of which we possess at least fragments, prove this fact conclusively. At his death, we read in Suetonius,[956] there were found three protocols written in his own hand and added to his will. The first referred to his funeral; the second contained a list of his deeds and doings, and an order to have it engraved on brass tablets which should be placed on the front of his mausoleum; the third was the *breviarium imperii.* Of the list of his deeds (*index rerum gestarum*) there exists a celebrated copy, engraved at the entrance to the temple which was built in his honor at Ancyra in Galatia. This list makes explicit mention of three censuses, one of them taken A.U.C.[746], consequently a few years before the birth of Christ. The *breviarium imperii* has disappeared; we know, however, from summaries which the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius give of it, of what matter it treated. 'It contained,' says Tacitus,[957] 'a summary of the resources of the state, the number of Romans and auxiliaries in the armies, the size of the navy, kingdoms, provinces, tributes, customs, the public expenditure and largesses.' Is it not evident that, to compile all these data, enumerations had to be made throughout the length and breadth of the Empire and even among

[955] We shall give the list below (Appendix XV).
[956] *August.,* 110.
[957] *Annales,* I, 11.

allied peoples? Then, too, later historians in most positive terms confirm St. Luke's data; and, to a certain extent, they do so from sources independent of his Gospel, since they add minute details. Suidas writes: 'Caesar Augustus chose twenty men from among the most excellent and sent them to all the countries of subject peoples and had them make a census of men and property.' " [958] St. Isidore of Seville, Cassiodorus, and others speak to the same effect.[959]

It is true that at the time of the Savior's birth Palestine was not yet a Roman province and that it became so only ten years later, after the removal of Archelaus. Herod the Great was governing it at that time,[960] in the capacity of *rex socius;* but his independence was merely nominal, since he had received his kingdom from the hands of the Emperor only on condition that he remain subject to Rome.[961] Contemporary history shows several facts that constitute so many proofs of that subjection. Herod was obliged to pay tribute regularly to the Romans.[962] When he wished to punish his sons, who had become rebels, he needed express authorization from the Emperor.[963] When, with the approval of the Roman generals, he levied troops to attack the bandits infesting a portion of his territory, Augustus was keenly incensed and wrote him that "whereas of old he had dealt with him as a friend, he would now treat him as his subject." [964] Despite his title of associate king, Herod was so dependent on the good will of the Emperor that he had not even the right to make his last will and testament freely. As we have already seen, after his death the will by which he divided his states among three of his sons

[958] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc,* p. 63.
[959] See the texts in H. Wallon, *De l'Autorité de l'Évangile,* 3d ed., pp. 305–320.
[960] Matt. 2:1–19; Luke 1:5.
[961] Josephus, *Ant.,* XVI, ix, 3.
[962] *Ibid.,* XIV, iv, 4; x, 5 f.
[963] *Ibid.,* XVI, xi, 1–7; XVII, v, 3–8; *Bell. Iud.,* I, xxvii, 1–7 and xxxii, 1–7.
[964] Josephus, *Ant.,* XVI, ix, 3.

(Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip), was only partially approved by Augustus.[965] And he was aware of that dependence. What with Rome arrogantly keeping its watchful eye on him, and his own people heartily detesting him, he knew that his throne was none too firm. He therefore redoubled his demonstrations of obsequiousness to Augustus. Thus, shortly before his death, he made his subjects take an oath of obedience, not only to his own person, but also to that of the Emperor.[966] Under these conditions he would take pains not to offer the least resistance to any decree whatsoever of his all-powerful protector.

The Romans, while maintaining their authority and, if need be, making it felt, had the good sense, in the interests of peace, to adapt themselves as far as possible to the habits and customs of the nations they had subjected. That is precisely what they did in Palestine. St. Luke gives us proof of this with regard to the census decreed by Augustus.

The imperial officer who more or less directly had charge of this undertaking was not without a certain renown in Rome and in Syria.[967] His full name was Publius Sulpicius Quirinius.[968] He was born in the little city of Tanuvium, located not far south of Rome. He attracted attention by his warlike valor and administrative ability. After holding the office of consul under Augustus, with whom he was in high favor, he became tutor of the young Gaius Caesar, the Emperor's nephew, and, probably twice, was made propraetor of the imperial province of Syria.

According to a prophetic oracle mentioned by St. Matthew,[969] the Messias, Son of David, was to be born in Bethle-

[965] *Ibid.*, XVII, viii, 2–4; ix, 3–6. *Bell. Iud.*, II, ii, 1–6.

[966] Six thousand Pharisees made themselves famous by refusing to take this oath of allegiance.

[967] See Tacitus, *Annales*, II, xxx, 4; III, xxii, 1 f., and XXIII, 1, 48; Suetonius, *Tiber.*, 49; Dio Cassius, LIV, 48.

[968] Κυρηνίος in Greek; Κυρεῖνος in some manuscripts, whose reading the Vulgate has followed (Cyrinus).

[969] Mich. 5:2; cfr. Matt. 2:4 f.

hem, a town illustrious in Israel's history because David himself was born there, and there was his home and that of his family.[970] In issuing his census decree, Augustus hardly suspected that he was serving as an instrument of Providence for the fulfilment of that prophecy.[971] God's ways are wondrous, as well in their complications as in their simplicity. He makes use of a pagan emperor's edict to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and to introduce His Christ into the framework of the world's history. And what a contrast, too! On one hand, the all-powerful head of the Roman Empire; on the other, a little Babe about to be born of a lowly woman of Israel, in a poor stable. And yet this Child will triumph over that mighty Empire and will one day subject it to His laws!

According to the Roman law, it was generally in the place of actual residence that each one registered, whenever a census was taken. For the Jews, however, in conformity with ancient practices which the Romans still consented to respect, the place of registration for each citizen was that where his family originated. This practice was connected with the ancient organization of the Hebrews by tribes, families, and houses. By virtue of the imperial edict, at the appointed time, which was not the same for all localities, those of the inhabitants of Palestine who were not living in the place of their family origin, "went to be enrolled, every one into his own city"; for there were to be found the public registers, which were very carefully kept among the Jews.[972] Joseph, therefore, set out "to go up" [973] from Nazareth to Bethlehem. For him this jour-

[970] 1 Kings 16:1–13; 17:12–15, 58.

[971] On the odd assertion of certain critics that Christ was born at Nazareth, and not at Bethlehem, see Appendix XIV.

[972] Esdras 2:59, 62; Josephus, *Vita*, I.

[973] So to speak, a technical expression, used to designate a journey having for its goal Jerusalem and its neighborhood, because, from whatever direction one comes, it is necessary to ascend in order to reach there. Cf. Matt. 20:17; Luke 2:42, etc.; Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible*, pl. XVIII, profile a and b.

ney was strictly obligatory, "because he was of the house and family of David,"[974] as the Evangelist tells us. Joseph was even the chief representative of that famous line, as we shall learn from Christ's genealogies, preserved by St. Matthew and St. Luke.

Mary, "his espoused wife,"[975] accompanied him on this long and wearisome journey. Was she, too, under obligation to go to Bethlehem? Several authors think so and allege various reasons, which, however, are not well founded. Some suppose that Mary owned property at Bethlehem, because of which she had to go personally to be registered. This hypothesis is contradicted by the difficulty she experienced in procuring a wretched shelter. Others have thought that her presence was required because she, too, belonged to the family of David. But it is certain that, among the Jews, women had no need to be directly registered; their husbands registered for them and for their children. The words "who was with child," added to Mary's name by the Evangelist, seem to indicate the true reason, since it appeared that the time for her delivery was near at hand. Further, it is possible that both she and St. Joseph had a heavenly inspiration. At any rate, understanding that "Providence thus disposed the events and willed that Jesus should be born at Bethlehem in fulfilment of the proph-

[974] Of these two expressions, "the house" and "the family," the former is less extensive, the latter more general. They are taken from the ancient Israelitic language. Each of Jacob's sons had founded a tribe (Hebrew, *matteh;* Greek, *φύλη*); the great branches of these tribes were designated by the substantive *mispahhah,* which the Septuagint translates *πατρία*, the Vulgate *familia;* each subdivision of these branches received the name of *beit 'abot,* "house of the fathers," Greek *οἶκος*, house, Latin *domus.* See F. Keil, *Biblische Archäologie,* § 140.

[975] The Greek text here offers three distinct readings: *τῇ μεμνηστευμένῃ αὐτῷ* (*desponsata sibi*); *τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ* (*uxore eius*); *τῇ μεμνηστευμένῃ αὐτῷ γυναικί* (*desponsata sibi uxore*). The third, adopted by the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Ethiopic, and numerous Greek manuscripts, may well be that of the Evangelist himself. It is certainly remarkable and, if authentic, harmonizes fully with the idea which St. Matthew and St. Luke wish to inspire in their readers on the subject of the perfect virginity of Mary, who was Joseph's spouse and at the

ecies which had thus indicated it," [976] Mary generously started out, confiding herself unreservedly to God's guidance.

Let us respectfully follow the footsteps of the holy spouses while they traverse the greater part of the length of Palestine from north to south.[977] Their journey was almost the same as that which Mary took nine months before, at the time of her visit to Elizabeth. Merely the last stage was different from the other in some slight degree, wherever the residence of the précursor's parents may have been.[978] On leaving Nazareth, the humble travelers, who were the object of Heaven's tender regard and who represented whatever was noblest and holiest on earth, at first followed the road leading directly to the plain of Esdraëlon. In spots the descent was difficult, the path becoming stony and slippery before reaching the vast plain.[979] This plain they crossed from north to south, leaving Thabor with its graceful dome on their left and, on their right, the green chain of Carmel. To-day the plain is only half cultivated and almost abandoned; but at that time it was dotted with cities and towns and produced crops as varied as they were abundant. Advancing southward, Joseph and Mary skirted the foot of Little Hermon, on the slopes of which spread out the villages of Naim and Sunem, the former celebrated in the Savior's history, the latter in that of Eliseus.[980] Then they passed through Jezreel, the ancient capital of the impious Achab, built on a height connected with the Gelboe mountains, which had been cursed by David because Saul and Jonathan met their sad deaths in their neighborhood.[981] En-

same time chaste as a betrothed. The word μεμνηστευμένη seems, in any case, perfectly assured.

[976] Calmet, *Commentaire Littéral, i. h. l.*

[977] See Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible,* plates X and XII.

[978] If it was Hebron, Mary would have had to pass through Bethlehem on the way; if it was Ain Karim, she was not far distant from the City of David.

[979] Guérin, *Description de la Palestine: Galilée,* I, 107.

[980] Luke 7: 11–15; 4 Kings 4: 8–37.

[981] 2 Kings 1: 21.

gannim, "the fountain of the gardens," so named because of the abundant spring that watered its territory, at all seasons encircled by a verdant crown of palm trees, olive trees, and others, undoubtedly served as a halting place for them. Not far away gradually rose up the mountain mass of Samaria, across which the road advanced with numerous curves, climbing, descending, only to climb still higher. After reaching the ancient city of Samaria, which had been lately rebuilt by Herod, it led in a few hours to Sichem, or Nablus, which showed itself, in an admirable location, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, almost midway on the route from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

On from that point there was ascent after ascent through a region possessing little in the way of natural beauty, but with several towns,—among others, Silo, then Bethel, then Rama, —which had been famous in the history of Israel. Soon appeared Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives. After passing through Jerusalem, our holy travelers had about six miles farther to go. When almost at the end of their journey, they could see in the distance the fortress which Herod had just recently constructed on the mountain, with its conical summit, which shut off the horizon to the southeast.[982] Then they passed by the tomb of Rachel and soon arrived at Bethlehem.

This place is one of the most ancient towns of Palestine. For a long while it was called Ephrata, "the Fertile."[983] Its name Bethlehem[984] means "House of Bread" and likewise refers to the fertility of its district. The Arabs replaced that name by *Beit-Lahrn* ("House of Meat"), no doubt because of the cattle abounding in that region. St. Jerome, in one of his letters, mentions the two Hebrew names, saying: "Hail, Beth-

[982] Its present Arabic name is *Djebel Foreidis.* In memory of the Crusades, it is also called Mount of the Franks.

[983] Gen. 35: 19.

[984] More exactly according to the Hebrew: *Beit lehhem.*

lehem, house of bread, where was born the Bread that came down from heaven! Hail, Ephrata, region rich in crops and fruit, whose fertility comes from God!" [985] St. Luke calls Bethlehem a city; [986] in reality it was a simple market-town,[987] as at the time when the prophet Micheas said of it: "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a [too] little one [to be reckoned] among the thousands of Juda," [988] that is, among the places containing a thousand families. In ancient times Bethlehem was never a city properly so called. For many years past it has been growing and to-day numbers about 10,500 population,[989] mostly Christians. But a bright ray of glory illumined it for ten centuries before our era, either because it had been David's country [990] or because of the lofty hopes connected with it, since it was to be the birthplace of the Messias.

The present city is built on the site of the ancient town. It occupies the tops of two limestone hills contiguous to each other. The eastern one, somewhat lower,[991] is also wider and its slopes are gentler. It is on the level height overlooking the town that the Church of the Nativity stands. On three sides at the foot of the two hills rather deep valleys open out. Within the town the streets are narrow, steep, and slippery, often dirty, as are all streets in Oriental cities. The surrounding countryside, as a whole, is pleasing to the eye, notwithstanding the barrenness of the rocky hilltops on every side. To the east the bluish or violet mountains of Moab rise up like a giant wall. In the immediate vicinity of Bethlehem, as in Our

[985] *Epist. ad Eustoch.*, CVIII.

[986] Luke 2:4: εἰς πόλιν Δαυείδ (Vulg., *in civitatem David*).

[987] John 7:42: ἀπὸ βηθλεὲμ τῆς κώμης (Vulg., *ex Bethlehem castello*).

[988] Mich. 5:2.

[989] *La Palestine*, by professors of Notre-Dame de France à Jerusalem, 2d ed., p. 248. On the native country of David and Christ, see the scholarly monograph by Fathers Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 1913.

[990] 1 Kings 16:1; 17:12. Hence the name, "City of David," which St. Luke (2:11) gives it.

[991] Bethlehem lies at an altitude of 2500 feet above sea-level.

Lord's time, stretch out well-cultivated, terraced gardens, descending as far as the lower valleys and shaded by long rows of olive trees, almond trees, and vineyards. Farther away you see fields and meadows whose verdure is restful to the eye in the fine season. At some distance the pilgrim has pointed out to him the field of Booz, where Ruth, the ancestor of David and of the Messias, gleaned before her marriage.

After relating Joseph's and Mary's coming to Bethlehem, St. Luke continues: "And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished." This expression, which has a certain tone of solemnity, recalls those still more solemn words of St. Paul: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of woman, made under the law." [992] But what a simplicity in the Evangelist's next expression, which announces a fact beside which all other events in the world's history pale into insignificance: "And she brought forth her firstborn Son." And how touching are the details: "And wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." [993] Painters, poets, and Christian orators have taken delight, each after his own fashion and to the best of his ability, in adorning the crib of the Incarnate Word, around which they have woven a rich and glorious crown. But nothing equals St. Luke's restrained and charming sketch. He makes not the least comment on this miracle of miracles; nor does he seek to emphasize the poverty, the humiliations, the plaintive cries of the King of kings, now become a little Child, and more wretched than most other little children. The sacred writer merely places before our enraptured gaze the Son of God and of Mary, stretched out in the manger of the animals. With good reason

[992] Gal. 4:4.

[993] Rationalist though he is, J. Weiss cannot help writing that, "down to our own days, these [delicate details] have for the great as for the lowly a charm that never wanes." (*Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 395).

might St. Augustine say[994] that all the circumstances in the event make it a school of humility and give us the most striking lesson in that virtue. But is it not true that these poor and humble surroundings more beseem, a thousand times more, a divine Savior than would the richness and magnificence of a royal court? "What a fitting retreat," says Bossuet, "for Him who in later life could say: 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' "[995] A beseeming crib, we might add, for Him who is to die on a cross.[996]

But how does it happen that the Messias is born in a stable? Let us not lose sight of the circumstances that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Other Israelites, whose families belonged originally to the city of David, had also been summoned by the edict of Augustus and they had arrived before the parents of Jesus. These latter found not only the private houses, but also the town's single khan or caravansary filled. Hence this pathetic remark of the Evangelist: "There was no room for them in the inn." This does not mean that they had been harshly refused hospitality, which has ever been a special virtue of the Jews. They found no other shelter than a stable, which, perhaps, belonged to the caravansary.[997]

[994] *Serm.*, XVIII: *"Omnis huius nativitatis schola est humilitatis officina."*

[995] *Élévations sur les Mystères,* sixth elevation of the sixteenth week.

[996] Here, more than anywhere else, the chaste beauty of the sacred narrative contrasts with the descriptions, so eager for marvels and often so shocking, of the apocryphal gospels, which, however, maintain Christ's birth in a stable. See the *Protevangelium Iacobi,* 18; Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* pp. 102–117; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen,* pp. 65–72.

[997] An Oriental khan or caravansary has nothing in common with our European hotels. Ordinarily it consists of a fairly large enclosure, in which is a one-story building where travelers can obtain free shelter. No food is furnished; this the travelers must provide themselves. According to some authors, the Greek word *κατάλυμα*, used here by St. Luke (Vulg., *diversorium*), does not mean a caravansary, but any sort of lodging (cfr. Luke 22:33), especially the house of some resident of Bethlehem who, having already received guests, could find for Mary and Joseph no other lodging but his stable. This opinion is very unlikely. See Zorell, *Novi Testamenti Lexicon Graecum,* p. 290.

How long had Mary been at Bethlehem when she brought forth her Divine Son? It is impossible to determine this with certainty. But, from the impression produced by St. Luke's account, it would seem that she became a mother shortly after her arrival, in fact, during the very first night.[998] From the attentions she was able to give her Babe, personally and immediately, it has been concluded that her delivery was without pain. It is, moreover, a firm Catholic belief, clearly and unanimously expressed from the earliest times, that the Mother of Christ remained a virgin in her parturition, as she had been in her miraculous conception, and as she remained throughout her life.[999]

"In the middle of the second century it was known in Palestine . . . that Jesus saw the light of day in a grotto. This is the fact that emerges from chapter 78 of St. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* between the years 155 and 160, and from chapter 18 of the *Protevangelium of James* (about 150)." [1] As St. Justin was a native of Palestine, his assertion has special value. Origen also refers to this blessed grotto as being well known in his time.[2] The learned Eusebius of Caesarea also

[998] According to Luke 2:8, 16, it seems certain that the Divine Infant was born during the night.

[999] The apocryphal gospels, which, as we have said, contain a few ingots of gold in a mass of rubbish, are very expressive on this point. See the *Protevangelium Iacobi,* 19; the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, 10:1; 12:4; 13:3; the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, 9:4; Bauer, *Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der apokr. Evangelien,* pp. 69–71; Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* pp. 112–114. The no less explicit testimony of the Fathers is more precious. We have that of Origen, *Homil. XIV in Luc.,* 2:23, and *Comment. in Matth.,* 10:17; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.,* VII, xvi, 93 f.; St. Cyprian, *Serm. de Nativ.;* St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.,* XL; St. Ambrose, *Exposit. in Luc.,* 2:23; St. Jerome, *Contr. Helvid.,* 8; St. Augustine, *Sermon.,* CXXIII (*"Virgo ante partum, in partu, post partum"*) and *Contr. Faust.,* XXIX, 4, etc. The theologians have merely had to record that teaching. Cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.,* 3a, qu. 35, art. 6; Suarez, *Disput.,* XIII, sect. 2, etc.

[1] Fathers Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem,* p. 2.

[2] *Contr. Cels.,* I, 5. Several of the apocryphal gospels do likewise: *Protevangelium Iacobi,* 18; History of Joseph, 7; Arab Gospel of the Infancy, 2, 5, 6; Pseudo-Matthew, 13 and 14.

mentions it.[3] St. Jerome was happy to pass the last years of his life in a neighboring grotto.[4] Near Bethlehem and in that whole region numerous natural caves are formed in the thick limestone which underlies the soil. But "in Judea, the grottoes are regarded as most desirable quarters for the cattle." [5] A tradition going back so far and confirmed by the customs of the country has, therefore, a right to respectful consideration, as many Protestant writers readily acknowledge.[6] And to-day it is in a grotto, surmounted by a rich basilica which St. Helena built between 327 and 333 [7] and which has been several times restored,[8] that Christian pilgrims venerate the spot made sacred by the birth of the Incarnate Word. This little crypt, long since transformed into a sanctuary, is about forty feet long, sixteen feet wide, and ten feet high. Its walls of solid rock are entirely covered with precious marbles. In front of the altar is a white slab, ornamented with a silver star, and on this slab is a Latin inscription, reading: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." Happy those whose privilege it has been to kneel at this spot!

What was the *year of Christ's birth?* How strange that it is not possible to-day to determine with certainty that eminently important date, which has been a subject of endless discussions and calculations.[9] Until the time of Dionysius

[3] *Demonstr. Evang.*, VII, 2.

[4] *Epist.*, XLVI, 10; LVIII, 3; CVIII, 10.

[5] Vincent and Abel, *op. cit.*, p. 6: "In default of these natural grottoes, the shepherds of the country prefer to dig open the entrances of tombs cut out of the rock, there to shelter their animals, rather than build stables that would be costly because they would have to be spacious and solid. We scarcely need to add that many a shepherd shares these rocky lodgings with his herd and that the race of troglodytes is far from being extinct in Palestine."

[6] *E. g.*, Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I, 185, n. 2.

[7] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, III, 41 and 43; Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, pp. 19–72.

[8] Vincent and Abel, *ibid.*, pp. 73–210.

[9] "For the birth of Christ, every year has been proposed and defended, even to the most unlikely limits, from 22 B. C. to 9 A. D." (H. Wallon). The honor of being connected with the Savior's birth has, therefore, been given to thirty-one consecu-

Exiguus,[10] a Roman abbot who lived in the middle of the sixth century, the ecclesiastical years were reckoned after the era of Diocletian, also called the "era of martyrs." But Abbot Dionysius had the happy idea of carrying out in a new way the celebrated expression of St. Paul, making Christ the center of all times (*plenitudo temporum*),[11] and of referring past, present, and future chronology to the Savior's birth. But unfortunately, because of faulty calculations, that chronology was erroneous at its starting point, which Dionysius, figuring it at four years later than the correct date, established as A. U. C. 754.

We know beyond doubt, according to the Evangelists,[12] that Christ was born "in the days of King Herod," and that the temporary exile of the Holy Family in Egypt ended after that ruler's death.[13] But Herod ascended the throne A. U. C. 714 and died early in 750, between the last days of March and the first days of April; [14] which corresponds to the beginning of the year four of our era. This date is certain in a general way. Jesus was born, therefore, not later than the beginning of April, A. U. C. 750; or possibly two or three years earlier.[15] We have a choice between 747, 748, and

tive years. If we consider only opinions of weight, this figure is reduced to eight years, from 7 B. C. to 1 A. D.

[10] Exiguus,—so named because of his small stature.

[11] Gal. 4:4.

[12] Matt. 2:1; Luke 1:5. In St. Luke's account, this date dominates everything comprised between 1:5 and 2:39, *i. e.*, from the angel Gabriel's appearance to Zachary to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

[13] Matt. 2:19.

[14] Josephus, *Ant.*, XIV, xiv, 5; XVII, vi, 4; viii, 1; ix, 3.

[15] This is no place for us to enter into calculations that would take us too far afield. See K. Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse der vier Evangelien*, 1843, pp. 49–132, and *Beiträge zur richtigen Würdigung der Evangelien und der evangelischen Geschichte*, 1869; G. Seyffarth, *Chronologia Sacra, Untersuchungen über das Geburtsjahr des Herrn*, 1846; A. W. Zumpt, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi; geschichtlich-chronologische Untersuchungen*, 1869; C. E. Caspari, *Chronologisch-geographische Einleitung in das Leben Jesu Christi; ein chronologischer Versuch*, 1880; Mémain, *La Connaissance des Temps Évangéliques*, 1886, pp. 53–104; Wallon, *L'Autorité de l'Évangile*, 3d ed., pp. 329–413, etc.

749, corresponding to the years 5, 6, and 7 of our era.[16] It is hardly possible to settle the matter more precisely than that.

As to the *day* on which Christ was born, it is certain that the date of December 25, although supported by an "ancient tradition," as St. Augustine regarded it,[17] does not rest on chronological calculations and that it has no strictly historical value. Nevertheless, "it is undeniable that the Feast of Christmas has been celebrated on that date since the earliest antiquity by the Church of Rome and all through the West. But it was only in the fourth century that Christians of the East fully adopted that feast and began also to celebrate it on December 25. Up to then they recognized only that of Epiphany, and some of them connected with that date (January 6) all of Our Lord's great manifestations: the Nativity, the adoration of the Magi, the Baptism of Christ, and the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana. . . . The tradition of the Roman Church, referring the Nativity to December 25, seemed better founded than the contrary opinion; consequently all the churches, as also all the doctors of the East, readily agreed to it." [18]

While Mary and Joseph were filled with love as they knelt beside the crib in the wretched cavern, no one at Bethlehem suspected that the greatest event in history had just occurred. Yet God did not will that His Christ should remain without other witnesses and without other adorers than His mother and His foster-father. The earliest ones whom He was pleased to call belonged to the theocratic nation, for which first of all, as the sacred writers often repeat, the Messias was born. But they were not chosen from the great ones of Israel, nor from the ranks of her priests and learned scholars, much less

[16] See E. Mangenot, art. *"Chronologie biblique," in* Vigouroux' *Dictionnaire de la Bible,* Vol. II, col. 735.

[17] *De Trinit.,* IV, 5.

[18] Mémain, *Connaissance des Temps Évangéliques,* pp. 97 f.

from the proud Pharisees. They were humble shepherds, full of faith, men who doubtless belonged to that moral *élite* of Judaism whose eager longings for the Redeemer we described above. Their pious homage is more in harmony with the abasement of the Divine Infant.[19]

It happens not infrequently that the temperature in Palestine is very mild in the month of December. It was so in the year of the Savior's birth. During that blessed Christmas night, taking turns every three or four hours, those whom God was about to honor by calling them to the crib, were guarding their flocks against wolves and robbers. According to an ancient tradition, it was about two miles east of Bethlehem that their sheep were pastured, in a little fertile plain where there was much grass. Suddenly an angel appeared to them and a wonderful light shone about them. St. Luke speaks of it as "the brightness of God," a name given it in many Old Testament passages.[20] This dazzling light and the sudden apparition quite naturally filled the shepherds with fear. The angel's first words reassured them: "Fear not." Then he delivered his message: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy,[21] that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."

What more joyous and blissful news could there be for the Jews, God's Chosen People, than that of the birth of the glorious and mighty Liberator, the yearning and desire for whom filled their glorious annals! Of saviors God had sent them several in periods of great distress; for example, in the person of the Judges and of Saul.[22] But what were they as compared with "Christ the Lord"! The combination of these two

[19] Cfr. 1 Cor. 1:27.

[20] Cf. Ex. 16:7, 10; 24:17; 40:33; Num. 16:43; 3 Kings 8:10 f.; and also Apoc. 21:11, 23.

[21] Εὐαγγελίζομαι (Vulg., *evangelizo*). Thus begins the fulfilment of Isaias' prophecy: *"Pauperes evangelizantur."* Cfr. Luke 7:22.

[22] 1 Kings 10:1.

titles is remarkable; nothing hinders us from seeing in the latter an indication of the Messias' Divinity.[23] It is not without a significant implication that the angel designates the town of Bethlehem by the name "city of David," since it had just become the birthplace of the Redeemer, who was sprung from the great king. The language employed in the announcement to the shepherds of Bethlehem was, therefore, no less clear than that of Gabriel to Mary; and it also contained in brief form a popular definition of the Messias. They understood it without difficulty, as the continuation of the account shows.

But first, like Mary herself, they received a "sign" without having asked for one. The angel says to them: "This shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." This precise direction would enable the shepherds to verify the truthfulness of the message, and easily discover the Infant, whom they were thus invited to seek as soon as possible. What a strange mark to characterize "Christ the Lord"! A new-born[24] infant lying in the manger of a stable! *"Diversoria angusta, et sordidos pannos, et dura praesepia,"* says Tertullian.[25] What a contrast between this absence of magnificence and the news of the coming of a mighty Savior! But, from His first adorers as from all those who come after, as also from Mary and Joseph, Christ chiefly requires faith, a simple and solid faith. It is unlikely that any other child was born during that blessed night in the city of David. At any rate, certainly none other was born in a stable.

Scarcely had the angel finished his message, when a melodious chorus resounded in the air. According to St. Luke's ex-

[23] St. Peter also applies them to Jesus in his sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:36).

[24] This is the sense of the Greek word *βρέφος*, "a nursling."

[25] *De Carne Christi*, 2. We hardly need to remark that the epithet *sordidos*, taken literally, would be an exaggeration. We must, then, give it here the sense of "poor." Mary had brought with her the simple linens which her own hands had lovingly prepared.

pression, again thoroughly Hebraic, it was "a multitude of the heavenly army," [26] that is, a numerous group of angels, who sang a joyful Alleluia to celebrate the Messias' birth. Thus, as we are told in the Book of Job,[27] did the heavenly spirits shout with gladness after the creation, in wonderment at its beauties. And now, in a short but wonderfully expressive canticle, they set the style for the adoration of mankind.

"Glory to God in the highest;
And on earth peace to men of good will."

What a hymn of triumph, what a sublime doxology, so perfectly summing up the character, meaning, purpose, and advantages of the Incarnation and birth of the Word! It is neither a wish nor a prayer, but the simple and eloquent statement of a fact. Like the song of the seraphim before God's throne,[28] the *Gloria in excelsis* is composed of only two notes. It consists of two statements, in perfect parallel, the first referring to God, the second to men. The three concepts, "glory, in the highest, to God," exactly correspond to the three parallel expressions, "peace, on earth, to men." To the Lord God, who has His throne in the highest of the heavenly spheres, the Christmas mystery brings infinite glory, worthy of Him. To men, who live on the earth, it brings peace, namely, according to the use of this word among the Hebrews, that totality of possessions or goods which constitutes true happiness.[29] Yet it is not all men without distinction who will en-

[26] In several passages of Scripture this expression designates the large number of angels, in serried ranks like those of an army, forming the court of the Most High in Heaven. Cf. 3 Kings 22:19. 2 Par. 18:18; Ps. 148:2, etc.

[27] Job 38:7.

[28] Is. 6:3.

[29] As we have already noted, in the Old Testament writings the reign of the Messias is often characterized as a reign of peace. The books of the New Testament again and again repeat that on this point the divine prophecies have been fulfilled. Cfr. John 14:27; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14, 17; Col. 1:20, etc.

joy this blessed peace, but, following the expression used by the Evangelist, only "men of good will"; in other words, those who deserve to be the object of divine favor.[30]

After thus filling the air with their melodious symphony, the angels departed as suddenly as they had come. But the words of the chief among them had penetrated to the depth of the shepherds' souls. These men, submissive and full of faith, urged one another to go with haste and offer their homage to the new-born Messias. "Let us go over to Bethlehem," said they to one another, "and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." With an eagerness which we can readily understand, they traversed the distance that separated them from the town. Their search [31] was soon crowned with success; they found the stable and in that wretched lodging Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger, in accordance with the angel's description.

St. Luke is always admirable in the simplicity with which he relates the greatest events. Here again he limits himself to a rapid sketch. He concludes his account of Christ's birth, however, by recording the impressions of three classes of persons. The shepherds, deeply touched by what they saw and heard, returned, "glorifying and praising God," whose

[30] Such is the true sense of this thoroughly Hebraic expression. It does not designate good will, a docility of men in relation to God, but that of the Lord, His love, His benevolence towards men. In our explanation of the angels' canticle we have, in agreement with the most recent commentators, accepted the reading εὐδοκίας, which is that of important early manuscripts and of the Vulgate (*bonae voluntatis*), the Syriac, the Coptic, the Gothic, of Origen (*Contr. Cels.*, I, 60), and of the Latin Fathers. Those who prefer the variant εὐδοκία (in the nominative) divide the *Gloria in excelsis* into three propositions instead of two:

Glory to God on high,
and peace on earth!
Good will to men!

But it is easy to see that with this arrangement the rhythm of the canticle largely disappears and that the third proposition adds very little to the second.

[31] The compound verb ἀνεύρον clearly expresses this detail.

greatness and goodness they proclaimed, for these two attributes were particularly manifested in the Christmas mysteries. Then, on returning to their village, they told the humble circle of their friends and neighbors the wonders which they had just beheld.[32] Thus did they become the first preachers of the glad tidings. Naturally their hearers, too, were in admiration at the amazing ways of the Lord. Several of them, no doubt, believed and came to offer their homage to the Divine Infant. Nevertheless, "everything leads us to suppose that their number was very limited, since the remembrance of Jesus seems to have been soon lost at Bethlehem, as later on at Jerusalem, despite the extraordinary events accompanying the Savior's Presentation in the Temple." [33] Besides, St. Luke's text itself seems to indicate that their astonishment was but a passing impression, in contrast with that which was produced in Mary.[34]

In a few words the Evangelist gives us a delightful picture of the Blessed Virgin's contemplative soul and of her pure and profound heart. Thanks to St. Luke, we can form some idea of the inner working of her soul. She gathered and kept in her memory "all these words," that is, all the things she saw and the words she heard with regard to Jesus; then she compared and combined them together so as to take a more exact reckoning of the divine plan. Amidst so many marvels, so calm and recollected did she remain that nothing escaped her, and from her maternal memories she formed a rich treasure, which she later communicated to the Apostles. But beside the crib she was silent, though she had so many wonders to relate. She knew that the hour had not yet come to manifest

[32] With most commentators we give the verb ἐγνώρισαν its usual meaning "to divulge," to make known. Furthermore, it is the meaning which it has a few lines above (Luke 2:15; Vulg., *ostendit*).

[33] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Luc*, p. 72.

[34] ἐθαύμασαν is the aorist, indicating a transient event; to this the Evangelist opposes the imperfect of continued action, συνετήρει, "she kept on preserving."

them to the world. As St. Ambrose says with exquisite delicacy, "Her lips were as chaste as her heart."[35]

On the eighth day following His birth, Jesus was circumcised, like John the Baptist. His blood was scarcely formed when He poured out the first drops for us while awaiting the time when, to use Bossuet's words, He would shed it "in great streams" on Calvary. No sooner is He born, "made of a woman," as St. Paul expresses it,[36] than He submits in full to the law, and, in these circumstances, to a rigorous law that imprinted on His sacred flesh a servile mark which seemed to place Him in the ranks of sinners. But will He not one day say that it becometh Him "to fulfil all justice," the whole will of God, His Father?[37] Already He conforms to this great principle which will rule His whole life.

It was on this occasion that our Lord officially received the name of Jesus, or "Savior," which had been designated, first by the angel Gabriel to Mary on the day of her Annunciation, and then to Joseph in a supernatural dream. How well, throughout His life, did He carry out its meaning in the fullest sense!

IV. The Davidic Descent of Jesus

On the Wednesday preceding His death, Jesus, after victoriously refuting the insidious objections advanced by His chief enemies for His destruction, put this question to them: "What think you of Christ? Whose son is he?"[38] They answered unanimously: "David's." Ever since the famous oracle delivered to David by the prophet Nathan,[39] such was, in

[35] *"Discamus sanctae Virginis in moribus castitatem, quae non minus ore pudica quam corpore, argumenta fidei conferebat." Expos. in Luc., i. h. l.* See also Bossuet, *Élévations sur les Mystères,* 12th elevation of the sixteenth week.

[36] Gal. 4:4.

[37] Matt. 3:15.

[38] Matt. 22:42.

[39] 2 Kings 7:1–29; 1 Par. 17:1–27.

fact, the faith of all Israel. This prophecy clearly proclaimed that the family of David had been chosen to be forever the depositary of the theocratic royalty and that, because of the Messias, his throne would endure forever. And that prophecy was solemnly repeated more than once during subsequent times. Long after the death of the great king and his immediate successors, even long after the apparently final fall of the Jewish State, there resounded through the pages of the Old Testament the voice of the prophets proclaiming that "David," or the "Son of David," or the "seed of the house of David," would reëstablish the overthrown seat of power and reign forever over the enlarged and regenerated nation.[40] This belief was, in a sense, anterior even to David, since the patriarch Jacob had predicted to his son Juda that it was among *his* descendants the future liberator would originate.[41]

In the interval that separates the two Testaments we perceive clear traces of that same promise: in particular in the apocryphal "Psalms of Solomon" [42] and in the rabbinical writings.[43] That is the reason why, when the crowds in the outer courts of the Temple were one day discussing the Messianic character of Jesus, to those who, in large numbers, affirmed: "This is the Christ," others, not knowing the circumstances of His birth, replied: "Doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Doth not the Scripture say that Christ cometh of the seed of David?" [44]

[40] Cfr. Ps. 2, 44, 71, 88, 109; Is. 11:1; 16:5; Jer. 23:5 f.; 30:9; 33:15, 17, 22; Ezech. 34:23 f.; 37:24 f.; Osee 3:5; Amos 9:11; Aggeus 2:22–24; Zach. 12:8, etc.

[41] Gen. 49:10; cfr. Num. 24:16–19.

[42] Ps. 17:5, 21–25.

[43] Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Berakhoth, 5, a (trans. by Moses Schwab, p. 42). Cfr. Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie,* 1880, pp. 341 f.; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 3d ed., II, 527; Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 260–262; *Philosophumena,* IX, 30.

[44] John 7:40–42.

The Gospels, in many places, indirectly sustain the same thesis, by specifying that Jesus, the Messias-King, was the descendant and heir of David. On his very first page[45] St. Matthew gives the Savior the title of Son of David; then, as we shall see presently, in concert with St. Luke, he sets down the proof of this assertion by transcribing His official genealogy. When announcing to Mary her miraculous maternity, the angel tells her that God will give the throne of David to the Son whom she will bear, and that His reign shall have no end.[46] Throughout the public life of Jesus the title "Son of David" is readily attributed to Him by the crowds as well as by individuals, by the sick poor who humbly beg the blessing of being cured, and by the enthusiastic multitude at the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.[47] Then, too, the Apostles Peter,[48] Paul,[49] and John[50] plainly connect Jesus, as the Messias, with the royal stock of David and of Juda.

These various New Testament texts simultaneously attest two parallel facts. They teach us, on the one hand, that it was an indisputable truth for the Jews at that time that the Messias would be born of the race of David, and, on the other hand, that the royal descent of Christ was, in the eyes of His countrymen in general as of His disciples, equally undeniable and duly established. The earliest tradition of the Church, outside the inspired Books, is also unanimous in connecting the Savior with the family of David. St. Ignatius of Antioch, at the beginning of the second century,[51] and St. Hegesippus a little later,[52] are the authentic voice of that tra-

[45] Matt. 1:1.
[46] Luke 1:32.
[47] Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30 f.; 21:9, 15; Mark 10:47 f.; Luke 1:32; 18:38 f., etc.
[48] Acts 2:30.
[49] Acts 13:22 f.; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 7:14.
[50] Apoc. 5:5; 22:16.
[51] *Epist. ad Eph.*, XX, 2; *Epist. ad Rom.*, VII, 3.
[52] See Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, xx, 1–2.

dition. The latter relates that the Emperor Domitian, hearing it said that Jesus had had near relatives who, like Himself, belonged to the royal race of David, was at first somewhat disturbed, fearing to find some rivals in their ranks. He had them brought to Rome; but his suspicions vanished when he saw before him simple men whose calloused hands revealed a life of hard labor and from whom evidently he had nothing to fear.

What was the exact significance of the title "Son of David" in Our Lord's time? Directly it presupposes in him on whom it is conferred the dignity of king and the exercise of royal functions. It was in this sense that the crowds surrounding Jesus at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and into the Temple, shouted their joyful acclaim: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed be the king who cometh in the name of the Lord!" [53] But, contrary to the false and extravagant ideas that we have several times had occasion to mention, Christ's royalty was chiefly spiritual and religious.[54] It excluded military prowess and ringing victories; it sought only to procure peace, peace within and without.[55] Yet it showed in the Messias a Savior as mighty as He was compassionate. The crowds that followed close on Our Lord's footsteps at once understood this characteristic of His reign, for more than once the afflicted appealed to His pity in imploring Him as the "Son of David." [56] This is why, after a miraculous cure that He had just performed, the enraptured witnesses said one to another: "Is not this the Son of David?" [57]

The Savior's Davidic descent could not be more strongly attested by the Evangelists and other New Testament writ-

[53] Matt. 21:9 15; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38.

[54] John 18; 36 f.

[55] Matt. 21:5.

[56] Matt. 9:27, two blind men; Matt. 15:22, the Syrophœnician woman; Matt. 20:30 f. (Mark 10:47 f.; Luke 18:39 f.), the blind men of Jericho.

[57] Matt. 12:23.

ers.[58] And yet, the two historians of the holy Infancy, wishing to forestall any doubts on this important point and to prove irrefutably to their readers, whether Jews or Greeks, that Jesus was truly descended from King David, drew up the list of His ancestors from official documents. That which St. Matthew has transmitted to us is placed at the beginning of his Gospel.[59] St. Luke inserts his at the beginning of Christ's public life.[60] We will quote in full these documents which are of such great interest.

First we give, according to St. Matthew, "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac. And Isaac begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Judas and his brethren. And Judas begot Phares and Zara of Thamar. And Phares begot Esron. And Esron begot Aram. And Aram begot Aminadab. And Aminadab begot Naasson. And Naasson begot Salmon. And Salmon begot Booz of Rahab. And Booz begot Obed of Ruth. And Obed begot Jesse. And Jesse begot David the king. And David the king begot Solomon, of her that had been the wife of Urias. And Solomon begot Roboam. And Roboam begot Abia. And Abia begot Asa. And Asa begot Josaphat. And Josaphat begot Joram. And Joram begot Ozias. And Ozias begot Joatham. And Joatham begot Achaz. And Achaz begot Ezechias. And Ezechias begot Manasses. And Manasses begot Amon. And Amon begot Josias. And Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren in the transmigration of Babylon. And after the transmigration of Babylon, Jechonias begot Salathiel. And Salathiel begot Zorobabel. And Zorobabel begot Abiud. And Abiud begot Eliacim. And Eliacim begot Azor. And Azor begot Sadoc. And Sadoc begot Achim. And Achim

[58] This has not hindered the critics from boldly contesting that fact. (See Appendix XVI).

[59] Matt. 1 : 1–17.

[60] Luke 3 : 23–38.

begot Eliud. And Eliud begot Eleazar. And Eleazar begot Mathan. And Mathan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations. And from David to the transmigration of Babylon, are fourteen generations; and from the transmigration of Babylon to Christ are fourteen generations."

The attentive reading of this list suggests several interesting reflections. It is provided with a title, indicating the formal end which the sacred writer had in mind in placing it before the eyes of the Jews, to whom he was addressing himself. It was with Abraham that God made the theocratic covenant which constituted the Hebrews His privileged people. With David the promise became still more precise, since it announced that the Messias would belong to that ruler's family. These two names, therefore, sum up the whole religious history of Israel, which was to end in Christ, Son of Abraham and Son of David. St. Matthew wanted to prove, by this official document, that Jesus fulfilled the essential condition of which we have spoken above. He clearly states that the Son of Mary and descendant of David according to the flesh had an undeniable right to the throne of His great ancestor, whose legitimate heir He was.[61]

On concluding the list of Christ's ancestors, the Evangelist divides it into three parts, corresponding to the three periods of Jewish annals. The first goes from Abraham, the founder of the theocratic nation, to David, the founder of the royal dynasty: this is the period of preparation for the kingdom. The second goes from Solomon to Jechonias, *i. e.*, to the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity: this is the royal period, gloriously inaugurated, but which from the time of the reign

[61] "For Matthew, Jesus is not only a descendant of David; but it is through Him that the race of David accomplished its aim." (E. Klostermann, *Matthäus*, in H. Lietzmann's *Handbuch zum N. T.*, p. 151).

of Roboam, Solomon's successor, witnessed the lamentable schism by which the nation was divided and weakened, and which, after a few passing attempts at relief, went from disaster to disaster, from one unfaithfulness towards God to another, until it finally ended in the overthrow of the throne and the State. The third period begins with the exile: outwardly it is a period of profound and grievous decay, but little by little it opens the way to Israel's moral revival and leads to the Messias. Thus it is that in the family of Christ, —and this consideration holds equally for the genealogy that we read in St. Luke,—"we find all the vicissitudes of other human families. Therein we meet with men of all sorts: shepherds, heroes, kings, poets, saints, and great sinners." [62] The time represented by their periods is, in round numbers, eleven hundred years for the first, four hundred for the second, and six hundred for the third,—a total of about two thousand one hundred and thirty years.[63]

Summing up his genealogical table in a short synthesis, St. Matthew asserts that each of the groups just enumerated contains fourteen generations. Yet, in its present form, which is certainly not a modification of the original, the third group includes only thirteen. Various expedients have been resorted to in order to render the figure exact. The most natural seems to be to count King Jechonias twice, as the Evangelist does: first at the end of the second group; then again at the beginning of the third.

Moreover, on comparing St. Matthew's list with the historical data supplied by the Books of Kings and Paralipomenon, we perceive that this manner of grouping and combining the names of Christ's ancestors, while quite correct, is somewhat artificial. In fact, in the second period, between

[62] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Matthieu*, p. 39.

[63] See Mangenot, art. *"Chronologie biblique,"* in Vigouroux' *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Vol. II, cols. 737–739.

Joram and Ozias, the Evangelist, or the document that he used, suppresses three kings of Juda: Ochozias, Joas, and Amasias.[64] The Jews were fond of dividing their genealogies into more or less artificial groups, according to mystical numbers determined in advance. In order to make the generations agree with such figures, they would omit or repeat certain names, as we see in this case. Thus the generations separating Adam from Moses are divided by Philo into two decades only, with the sacrifice of six names, chosen from the less important.[65] Although in St. Matthew's list the verb "begot" ought to be understood of one generation strictly so called, it does not always necessarily designate a generation immediately following the preceding one.

The mention of four women amidst patriarchs, kings, and royal princes, occasions a double surprise: in the first place, because the Jews usually mentioned only men in their genealogical tables; in the second place, because certain faults stained the lives of those here mentioned. Thamar was guilty of incest;[66] Rahab was of the Canaanean race and had lived in immorality,[67] notwithstanding her genuine merits; Ruth was also of pagan origin;[68] Besabee (the wife of Urias) had committed adultery.[69] What a contrast with the spotless mother of Christ, whose name terminates the genealogy! It is probable that these women receive special mention here because they had become, all of them, ancestors of the Messias in extraordinary and providential ways.

St. Luke set forth the genealogy of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the following terms: "Jesus . . . being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph, who was of Ma-

[64] Cf. 4 Kings 8:24; 11:2; 12:1; 14:1; 1 Par. 3:11 f.
[65] See Fillion, *op. cit.*, pp. 39 f.
[66] Gen. 38:14–18.
[67] Josue 2:1; Heb. 11:31.
[68] Ruth 1:4.
[69] 2 Kings 11:1–5.

that, who was of Levi, who was of Melchi, who was of Janne, who was of Joseph, who was of Mathathias, who was of Amos, who was of Nahum, who was of Hesli, who was of Nagge, who was of Mahath, who was of Mathathias, who was of Semei, who was of Joseph, who was of Juda, who was of Joanna, who was of Reza, who was of Zorobabel, who was of Salathiel, who was of Neri, who was of Melchi, who was of Addi, who was of Cosan, who was of Helmadan, who was of Her, who was of Jesus, who was of Eliezer, who was of Jorim, who was of Mathat, who was of Levi, who was of Simeon, who was of Judas, who was of Joseph, who was of Jona, who was of Eliakim, who was of Melea, who was of Menna, who was of Mathatha, who was of Nathan, who was of David, who was of Jesse, who was of Obed, who was of Booz, who was of Salmon, who was of Naasson, who was of Aminadab, who was of Aram, who was of Esron, who was of Phares, who was of Judas, who was of Jacob, who was of Isaac, who was of Abraham, who was of Thare, who was of Nachor, who was of Sarug, who was of Ragau, who was of Phaleg, who was of Heber, who was of Sale, who was of Cainan, who was of Arphaxad, who was of Sem, who was of Noe, who was of Lamech, who was of Mathusale, who was of Henoch, who was of Jared, who was of Malaleel, who was of Cainan, who was of Henos, who was of Seth, who was of Adam, who was of God." (Luke, II, 23–38).

Let us note in this list, as we did in that of St. Matthew, a few characteristic traits. Its form is of the greatest simplicity. Instead of grouping the names of Christ's ancestors systematically by periods, it simply enumerates them one after the other, according to the order of generation.[70] Moreover,

[70] Instead of the phrase *qui fuit,* which we read in the Vulgate, the Greek text uses the article in the genitive: Ἰησοῦς . . . ὢν υἱός . . . Ἰωσήφ, τοῦ Ἡλεὶ, τοῦ Ματθὰτ . . . , "Jesus, being son of Joseph, [son] of Heli . . . , [son] of Mathat . . ."

whereas St. Matthew here and there inserts a short remark with regard to certain personages, St. Luke restricts himself to the rôle of recorder and does not break the monotony of his lengthy list. Instead of following the descending order of ancestors, which would be more conformable to the natural order as well as that of the official register, he traces back the generations from Jesus to David, to Abraham, etc. A much more striking fact is that, in place of ending his list with Abraham, he continues it, taking in all the patriarchs both after and before the Deluge, up to Adam, nay, even to God.[71] The author of the First Gospel was satisfied with relating the Child of Mary to David and to the father of believers; but St. Luke had a vaster plan and desired to show his readers that the Redeemer, who brought salvation to all men without exception, was connected by birth with the father of the human race, and consequently with all mankind. His enumeration appears not to omit a single one of Christ's ancestors. Although the sacred writer made no divisions, we may naturally divide his list into four sections, which go from Adam to Abraham (twenty-one names), Isaac to David (fourteen names), Nathan to Salathiel (twenty-one names), Zorobabel to Jesus (twenty-one names)—a total of seventy-seven names according to the most authentic reading of the Greek text.[72]

The differences that we have thus far pointed out between the two genealogies concern only the external form and are easily explained. But there are others which seem to reach to the very contents of the lists, in a way to create a contradiction between them. Here are the facts: although both Evangelists purposed to construct the Savior's genealogical tree, as a matter of fact, in their enumerations, between David

[71] This leads St. Ambrose to say (*Exposit. in Luc. i. h. l.*) that the list begins with the Son of God and closes with another son of God; but the latter's divine sonship is very different from the former's.

[72] The Vulgate cites only thirteen names from Isaac to David, seventy-six names in all. In the Greek manuscripts and in the versions there are abundant

and St. Joseph, we find utterly different names, save for Salathiel and Zorobabel. They are in agreement only between Abraham and David. St. Matthew relates Jesus to David through Solomon, *i.e.*, by the direct royal line; St. Luke, on the contrary, through Nathan, by a secondary and collateral branch. Salathiel had Jechonias as his father according to the First Gospel; Neri according to the Third. St. Matthew has Joseph born of Jacob; St. Luke gives him Heli as a father.

We have here a real exegetical problem which early Christian authors strove to solve, for it disturbed the faith of a fair number of the faithful[73] and gave a handle to the attacks of enemies of the Gospel. The problem has served as a subject for many writings from the second century down to our own day.[74] "The various attempts which have been made at reconciling the divergences, although in no case convincingly successful, are yet sufficient to show that reconciliation is not impossible. If we were in possession of all the facts, we might find that both pedigrees are in accordance with them. Neither of them presents difficulties which no addition to our knowledge could solve."[75]

We will here mention only the two principal schemes suggested by exegetes to harmonize St. Matthew and St. Luke.[76]

variants in the transcription of these Hebrew words, with their difficult spelling, which the copyists did not fail to distort.

[73] Eusebius, *H. E.*, I, vii, 1.

[74] Two monographs recently published on this subject—Vogt, S. J., *Die Stammbäume Christi bei den heiligen Evangelisten Matthäus und Lukas,* 1907, and J. M. Heer, *Die Stammbäume Jesu nach Matthäus und Lukas,* 1910—contain a very complete bibliography. See also Calmet, *Dissertation où l'on essaye de concilier S. Matth. et S. Luc sur les Généalogies de Jésus-Christ;* Patrizi, *De Evangeliis Libri III, dissert.* IX; Lord Hervey, *The Genealogies of Our Lord Jesus Christ,* 1855; Wieseler, *Beiträge zur richtigen Würdigung der Evangelien,* 1869, pp. 133–148; Wallon, *L'Autorité des Évangiles,* 3d ed., pp. 430–436; Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., I, 366–374; and the principal Gospel commentaries.

[75] Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke,* 1896, p. 103.

[76] That of Cornelius à Lapide, according to which the two lists contain the

1. Both genealogies are those of St. Joseph. If they present considerable differences in the period between David and the putative father of Jesus, it is because of the fact that, during that interval, the law of the levirate, as the Jews called it, operated twice. By virtue of this law, when a married Israelite died without issue, his brother or closest relative was obliged to marry the widow, if she were still of an age to become a mother.

The first male child issuing from this second marriage was regarded as belonging to the deceased and became his legal heir.[77] That being so, it is supposed that Jacob, next to the last on St. Matthew's list, and Heli, next to the last on St. Luke's list, were uterine brothers, *i.e.,* sons of the same mother, but having different fathers (Mathan in one case, Mathat in the other). Further, we are to suppose that Heli died without children and that Jacob, marrying Heli's widow, had by her a son, the future husband of Mary. The same hypothesis may be applied to the case of Jechonias (real father) and Neri, his uterine brother (legal father), and of their son Salathiel. Under these conditions, the two genealogies are conceived as being totally dissimilar, since one of them, St. Matthew's, mentions the real fathers, while the other, St. Luke's, lists the legal fathers. Moreover, it is not at all impossible that the law of the levirate should thus operate twice in one and the same family in the course of a thousand years.

Such, in short, was the theory advanced at the beginning of the third century by Julius Africanus in a letter of which Eusebius of Caesarea has preserved a considerable portion.[78] It is offered only by way of a hypothesis; but that hypothesis was regarded as so weighty that it was substantially adopted

genealogy of the Blessed Virgin,—on her maternal side in the First Gospel, on her paternal side in the Third,—offers no likelihood and has scarcely found an echo.

[77] Deut. 25:6; Ruth 4:1–12.

[78] *H. E.,* I, vii.

by most of the Fathers and commentators down to the latter part of the sixteenth century.

2. Annius of Viterbo then proposed another explanation, which soon enjoyed great vogue.[79] In short it amounts to this, that, while giving the true genealogy of Jesus, the two sacred writers have not made it out in the same sense. The First Gospel enumerates the ancestors of Joseph; the Third, those of Mary. Consequently, we would have, in the first list, the Savior's legal genealogy; in the second, His natural and real genealogy. This opinion is based on the following reasons: (*a*) If the two lists refer to Joseph, that is, to Christ's putative father, Jesus was David's heir only by adoption, in other words, only by a legal fiction. (*b*) In his entire account of the Savior's infancy, St. Luke always places St. Joseph in the background, while Mary is for him the chief personage;[80] furthermore, at the outset of his enumeration, he explicitly places the historical reality in opposition to the popular opinion: "Jesus . . . being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph." Would it not seem contradictory if, immediately after that statement, he identified the ancestors of Jesus with those of Joseph? (*c*) Supposing that the legal series of Christ's ancestors, as St. Matthew has handed them down to us, would suffice for Jewish readers, St. Luke's pagan readers might not be satisfied and might require proof of a real descent. But only Christ's genealogy through His mother contained that demonstration in an absolute manner. (*d*) The very text itself seems to favor the theory of Annius of Viterbo. Whereas all the other names proper to St. Luke's list are preceded by the article in the original text, that of Joseph is the only one without it, as if it had been intended to con-

[79] In his long list of those who follow the second theory, Father Vogt cites eighty-two Catholic exegetes or theologians and almost the same number of Protestants.

[80] See *supra*.

sider it apart from the others. A considerable number of interpreters still further isolate it from the other members of the genealogy by placing between parentheses the words "being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph," and by referring to Jesus all the genitives that follow: "Being in reality son . . . of Heli, of Mathat, of Levi, of Melchi . . ." Heli would thus be Mary's father, the grandfather of Jesus, the father-in-law of Joseph. Commentators who decline to have recourse to this evidently forced expedient, and who translate according to the natural sense of the phrase: "Jesus was, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Mathat," remark that the word "son," which improperly designates a sonship for Adam at the end of the list, may very well have been used figuratively to indicate the relationship of father-in-law and son-in-law between Heli and Joseph.

If we could prove the soundness of this second scheme, the problem of Christ's genealogy would be solved in the simplest manner. It is undoubtedly for this reason that it found so great a number of defenders. Unfortunately, it seems to lack a solid foundation, for there is nothing in St. Luke's account to indicate that he intends to give Mary's genealogy. We may even say that if one takes his expressions literally, in the manner of good and loyal exegesis, it is hardly possible not to believe that he, too, has drawn up the genealogy of Christ's adoptive father. Hence the Fathers and other competent interpreters have seen in the Third Gospel, as in the First, the list of Joseph's ancestors. We may add that Julius Africanus, a man of critical mind, made inquiries about the genealogy of Jesus from certain surviving members of His family, the *desposyni,* as they were then called,[81] and they did not attribute to Mary the list of ancestors recorded by St. Luke.

What seems to us Occidentals to be the chief difficulty with

[81] We shall presently speak of this at greater length.

the arrangement which connects the two genealogies with St. Joseph is that it establishes Jesus' Davidic descent through the bond of legal sonship, which impresses us as being fictitious. But in the opinion of the Jews a legal filiation had "no less value than a real filiation," for "it conferred the same rights." [82] Little does it matter, then, that Jesus was only the adopted son of Joseph. Joseph, by accepting Him as his own, transferred to Him all his rights to the royal succession of David. This principle was at that time so well recognized that no Jewish judge would have denied Jesus the legitimacy of His titles.[83] It is not without good reason that St. Matthew, in concluding his enumeration,[84] calls to mind that Joseph was "the husband of Mary," since the Child of the Virgin Mother would thus become the heir of His legal father.[85]

Furthermore, the matter becomes largely explained and settled if we bear in mind that Mary herself belonged, and that very closely, according to an ancient and constant tradition,[86] to the royal race of David. Thanks to her, Jesus' legal rights to the throne of His forefathers were therefore corroborated by rights which birth and blood gave Him.

Hence, while Christ's double genealogy, as transmitted by St. Matthew and St. Luke, will probably always present some unexplained elements, owing to a lack of sufficient data to allow us entirely to solve the difficulty, we can be certain that the two lists correspond to genuine family traditions and re-

[82] Lagrange, in the *Revue Biblique,* 1895, p. 178.

[83] Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 263. See the Talmudic tractate Baba bathra, VIII, 6.

[84] Matt. 1 : 16.

[85] This fact is beyond dispute. "In the eye of the law, Jesus was the heir of Joseph, and therefore it is Joseph's pedigree that is given. As the heir of Joseph, Jesus was the heir of David; and hence there is no inconsistency in the fact that precisely the two Gospels which record the Virgin-birth are the two which record the pedigree of Joseph." (Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew,* p. 2).

[86] See Appendix X.

liable documents. "In any event, the Gospel speaks the truth." [87] And so far from distrusting the sacred writers who have preserved these precious genealogical tables for us, we are deeply indebted to them.[88]

[87] It is with these words that Julius Africanus concluded his thesis.

[88] The Rationalist critics almost unanimously reject the historical character of the two genealogies. (See Appendix XVI.)

CHAPTER III

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the Purification of Mary

"THE firstfruits are mine," said the Lord.[89] According to the text of the law, "Every firstborn [male] [90] that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, as well of men as of beasts," had to be consecrated to Him. The firstborn of animals were offered in sacrifice or redeemed, according to their nature. The firstborn of the theocratic race had been destined at first for the exercise of priestly functions; but later, when God confided the service of divine worship exclusively to the tribe of Levi, He ordered that exemption to be compensated for by a payment of five shekels,[91] *i. e.*, about three dollars, which went into the priests' treasury.[92]

At the time of Christ that law was still in full vigor, being regarded as essential for the maintenance of God's rights over His people. The casuistry of the rabbis did not fail to regulate its details minutely. The redemption could not take place, at the earliest, until thirty-one days had elapsed—thus allowing a full month after birth. If the child died in this interval, the obligation of paying the five shekels ceased. It was by no means required that the newborn child be brought to Jerusa-

[89] The equivalent of these words recurs in the last four books of the Pentateuch, and frequently elsewhere in the Old Testament.

[90] Ex. 13: 2. Literally: "Every male opening his mother's womb."

[91] We remind the reader that the shekel was a silver coin worth about 57 cents.

[92] Num. 3: 12; 7: 14–18; 18: 15–17. From many of these passages it follows that the Lord, in reserving to Himself the firstborn of Israel, wished to impress upon all the Hebrews the grateful remembrance of their departure from Egypt, which Pharaoh permitted only after the tenth plague (the death of all the firstborn among the Egyptians). See Keil, *Lehrbuch der bibl. Archäologie,* sec. 71.

lem and presented in the Temple; the father merely had to pay the sacred tax to a priest of his district. In case the newborn child were afflicted with any bodily deformities that would have rendered him unfit for the priesthood,—if he were blind or lame, or his face were disfigured, etc.,[93]—the obligation of the redemption likewise ceased.

By virtue of another law, on which the Book of Leviticus furnishes precise details,[94] forty or eighty days after each childbirth—forty days if the child was a boy, eighty if it was a girl [95]—Jewish mothers were bound to present themselves at the Temple in Jerusalem for the removal of the legal impurity which they had contracted. But it was allowed to postpone this journey, if one had a good excuse for so doing; for example, if the mother would be going to the Holy City a little later to celebrate one of the great religious feasts. Moreover, the mother was not obliged to present herself at the sanctuary in person if she lived far away from Jerusalem. Some woman friend could then replace her, on condition that the sacrifices called for by the law were offered in her name.[96] Nevertheless, most Jewish mothers heartily desired to carry out the precepts of the law, and we can understand that they would profit by the occasion to bring with them their firstborn babe, whose redemption they combined with the ceremony of their own purification.

As the Fathers long ago remarked,[97] these two humiliating precepts in reality did not bind either Jesus or Mary. As God, Christ was infinitely above the Mosaic Law, and He was no more under obligation to pay this tax than He was to pay that of the Temple, from which He later declared Himself

[93] Lev. 21 : 11–23.

[94] Lev. 12 : 1–8.

[95] The rabbis added an extra day in each case in order to make sure that the interval set by the lawgiver had been completed.

[96] Tractate Shekalim, 5, b; see Keil, *op. cit.*, sec. 60.

[97] In particular St. Hilary, *Hom. in Evang.*, XVIII.

exempt.[98] As for His mother, she had brought Him into the world outside of all conditions considered by the lawmaker; by the very terms of the Mosaic Code, the most pure Virgin had no purification to undergo. But obedience and humility were ever the characteristic virtues of Our Lord and His mother. Was not Jesus, "made of a woman," at the same time "made under the law," according to St. Paul's beautiful reflection,[99] and did He not become incarnate precisely to redeem by His obedience "them who were under the law"?[100] Did it not become Him, from the beginning of His human life, "to fulfil all justice"?[101] And Mary's dispositions did not differ from His in the matter of perfection.

Forty days after Christmas, therefore, Mary and Joseph brought the Divine Infant to Jerusalem, in order to perform the prescribed ceremonies.[102] From Bethlehem one day was amply sufficient to go and return. The sacred writer passes over almost entirely in silence the double ceremony that took place in the Temple, first for Mary, then for the Infant Savior. The rabbinical writings allow us to supplement the Evangelist's brief account up to a certain point. It was in the morning, after the ceremony of incensing and the offering of the perpetual sacrifice, that the Levitical purification of

[98] Matt. 17:26.

[99] Gal. 4:4.

[100] *Ibid.*, 5; cfr. Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17.

[101] Matt. 3:15.

[102] The words by which St. Luke introduces a part of his account calls for a short explanation. According to the best accredited reading of the Greek text, the Evangelist says: "When the days of their (αὐτῶν) purification arrived." Why is the pronoun in the plural, since the purification concerned only the mother? It surprised Origen, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Ambrose, and many others. Incompetent copyists vainly tried to change αὐτῶν to αὐτῆς ("her," Mary's) or αὐτοῦ ("his," Jesus'). It is thought that the plural might refer either to the Jews in general (the purification which was in use among them) or to Mary and Joseph together. This latter interpretation seems more in accord with the language used by the Evangelist: "When the days of their purification were accomplished, they carried him . . ." (Luke 2:22).

mothers took place. They entered the Women's Court and took their stand on the highest step of the stairs leading from this court to that of Israel, near the majestic gate that bore the name of Nicanor.[103] Various authors suppose that the priests on duty sprinkled the women with lustral water and recited special prayers over them.[104] But the principal part of the rite consisted in the offering of two sacrifices.[105] The first bore the technical name of "sacrifice for sin," that is, an expiatory sacrifice; a turtledove or a young pigeon formed the material of the sacrifice. The second was a holocaust, and the victim required was, for the rich, a yearling lamb, for the poor, a turtledove or young pigeon. It follows from St. Luke's language[106] that Mary offered for herself the sacrifice of the poor, the *qorbân 'ani,* as the rabbis called it. Joseph bought the two turtledoves or the two pigeons, either from the manager who, in the name of the priests, sold the various animals intended for sacrifice according to a scale of prices usually very high, or from one of those greedy merchants whose cages Our Lord overturned at a later day.[107] The officiating priest broke the neck of the bird chosen as a victim of expiation, but without detaching the head from the body, and let the blood flow at the foot of the altar; the meat was reserved for the priests on duty, who could consume it only within the sacred enclosure. The bird which served as a holocaust was burned entire on the brazier of the brazen altar.

Externally the ceremony of the presentation[108] or redemp-

[103] Nicanor had been a Syrian general, very hostile to the Jews. Judas Machabeus overcame and slew him in a glorious battle and fastened his head and hands by way of a trophy in this part of the Temple. Cf. 2 Mach. 15: 25–35.

[104] On the "churching" ceremonies among modern French Jews, see Coypel, *Le Judaisme, Esquisse de Mœurs Juives,* pp. 95 f.

[105] Lev. 12: 6–8.

[106] Luke 2: 24: "to offer . . . a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

[107] Matt. 21: 12; John 2: 13–15.

[108] This name comes from the expression which St. Luke uses here: "They

tion of the child was much simpler, since it seemed to have had no other rite than the payment of the five shekels. But what are we to say of Jesus' inner feelings on the occasion of this first visit made to His Father's Temple? St. Paul, in terms taken from the thirty-ninth psalm,[109] wonderfully expresses the feelings that filled the soul of the Divine Child. At the first moment of His Incarnation, "When he [Christ] cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou [O God] wouldest not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God." [110] At the moment of His presentation, Jesus renewed that offering of His whole being, dedicating Himself without reserve to His Father, to replace the bloody and gross victims which His sacrifice on Calvary was going to make useless and to suppress altogether. As has been said, this morning sacrifice, offered so generously by Him, is a certain presage of the evening sacrifice, and He will not cease offering it until He consummates it on the Cross. What must have been the feelings of Mary as she gave to God the fruit of her virginal womb, that upon Him and upon herself God might carry out His holy will! In a moment she will learn that her oblation was accepted and that she would be, in her own person, immolated as a gentle victim with her Son.

It has often been remarked, following St. Ambrose,[111] that to almost every humiliation of the Child Jesus there corresponded, by way of providential compensation, a halo of transient glory, as if His heavenly Father had willed to testify

carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord." The Greek verb παραστῆσαι has a religious meaning here. It corresponds to the Hebrew *haqerib*, literally, "to approach" (the altar), which serves to designate the offering of bloody or unbloody sacrifices.

[109] Verses 7 f.

[110] Heb. 10: 5 f.

[111] *Exposit. in Luc.* 2: 25.

special favors for Him, even in the midst of His mysteries of self-abasement. He is born in a stable; but heavenly spirits celebrate with joyous chant the blessings that He brings to the earth. He is circumcised as a sinner; but He receives at the same time "a name which is above all names." [112] He is redeemed as an ordinary Israelite, and His mother offers for Him the sacrifice of the poor; but two new witnesses, the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna, are raised up to render pious homage to Him.

On the first of these witnesses, St. Luke in a few words pronounces the most perfect eulogy that could be addressed to a son of Abraham: "There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him." [113] Simeon combined justice, which here means a conscientious and supernatural observance of the law, with fear of God, accompanied by fervent love,[114] and an unshakable faith which, in spite of the sadness of the times, never lost sight of the divine promises and always kept alive in his soul the expectation of "the consolation of Israel." This last expression, despite its abstract form, is another exquisite designation of the Messias and His many blessings. Groaning beneath the hated scepter of the Idumean Herod, and under the heavy yoke of the Romans, the theocratic nation needed, as in the saddest epochs of its history, a consoler who would wipe away and dry its bitter tears. The prophets of old had foretold the coming of this *menahhem,*[115] of whom the Targums and the Talmud often speak. What heavenly joy, what holy happiness was He not to bring on earth, especially to Israel! Isaias speaks of Him in these delightful terms: "The Lord hath sent

[112] Phil. 2:9.

[113] Luke 2:25.

[114] The Greek adjective *εὐλαβής*, which the Vulgate translates by *timoratus*, in the Septuagint sometimes stands for *hasid*, "pious."

[115] "Consoler."

me . . . to comfort all that mourn: to appoint to the mourners of Sion and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief." [116]

Simeon's virtues were so pleasing to the Holy Ghost that they established Him permanently, so to speak, in that beautiful soul. This pious inhabitant of Jerusalem has been identified with various Jewish personages of the same period, who bore the name of Simeon. Thus he has been made out to be Rabbi Simeon, son of the famous Gamaliel, and supposed to have been president of the Sanhedrin in the year 13 of our era; [117] or he is supposed to be a high priest of that period.[118] But these hypotheses are unfounded. Moreover, the Evangelist would not have designated any dignitary by the vague words "there was a man," "this man." [119] Simeon's age is not stated exactly; yet it follows from the whole account that he was advanced in years, without, however, being the decrepit old man set forth in the apocryphal literature.[120]

The Holy Spirit, in one of those interior communications that ordinarily accompany His abiding presence in a soul, revealed to Simeon, in response to his eager longings and repeated prayers, "that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord." [121] Now the divine promise is to be fulfilled. Having come to the Temple that day, by virtue of a special inspiration, he met Mary and Joseph just as they

[116] Is. 61:1–3. See also 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 60:1–22; 66:13, etc.

[117] See Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in Evangel. i. h. l.* Otho, *Lexicon Rabbinico-Philologicum,* pp. 697 f., etc. But, according to Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 3d ed., II, 353 f., the very existence of this Simeon is problematic.

[118] See the Gospel of Nicodemus, XVI (Brunet, *Les Évangiles Apocryphes,* 2d ed., p. 253).

[119] Luke 2:25.

[120] History of the Nativity of Mary, XVI; cfr. Brunet, *op. cit.,* pp. 200, 212.

[121] This language is very expressive. The figure, "to see death," is also employed in Ps. 88:49, and by St. Paul, Heb. 11:5. John 8:52, we read: "to taste death."

were entering the sacred precincts and, turning his looks upon that blessed group, he was enlightened from on high and understood that the Child resting in the young mother's arms was the Redeemer of Israel. Gently and piously taking Him into his arms, Simeon pressed Him to his heart and spoke out in prophetic transport:

"Now Thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord,
According to thy word in peace;
Because my eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples;
A light to the revelation of the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel."

This sublime canticle forms, after Zachary's *Benedictus,* Mary's *Magnificat,* and the angels' *Gloria in excelsis,* the fourth of the hymns of the Incarnation which St. Luke has preserved for us. The *Nunc dimittis* is a prophecy as well as a poem. It has often been admired for its "noble beauty," its "singular sweetness," its "most pleasing solemnity," for the intensity of the feelings that it expresses, and for its "rich conciseness." It is a veritable lyric gem. It is divided into three short strophes, of two members each. The first contains an act of thanksgiving to God; the second expresses the reason for the thankfulness; the third points out the rôle that Jesus was called on to fill as Messias. Each word is expressive: in the first strophe, the emphatic *nunc* at the beginning, and the calm *in pace* at the end. "Now" Simeon can die and it is "in peace" without regrets that he will die, all his longing being gratified, since he has beheld with his enraptured eyes Him whom so many kings and prophets had so earnestly desired to see, without tasting that happiness.[122] Like the patriarch Jacob, when he recovered his beloved Jo-

[122] Matt. 13:16; Luke 10:24.

seph,[123] Simeon is overwhelmed with joy. We must admire the elegance of the Greek verb [124] that corresponds to the Latin *dimittis,* signifying the freeing of a prisoner, the relief of a sentry, in all cases a happy deliverance.[125]

In the second strophe, in conformity with so many ancient oracles, Simeon mentions the salvation which the Messias was bringing to the entire world. Then, in the third, he points out that redemption will not be effected in the same manner for all men. From the religious point of view, humanity at that time was divided into two distinct categories; the theocratic nation and the Gentiles. To each the Christ will offer His gifts and graces under a special form, adapted to the promises made to the former and the needs of the latter. For the Gentiles plunged in moral darkness, it will be a brilliant light that will illumine their minds and hearts;[126] for the Jews, His brethren according to the flesh, among whom He will live and labor, it will procure a higher order of glory.

Simeon could not have spoken more eloquently. "With this Infant in his arms, it was as if he stood on the mountain-height of prophetic vision and watched the golden beams of sunrise shining far away over the isles of the Gentiles, and then gathering their full glow over his own beloved land and people." [127] The horizon of the *Nunc dimittis* is, therefore, appreciably more extended than that of the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat;* for it contemplates the rôle of the Messias, with respect not only to Israel, but to all mankind.[128]

Upon hearing these prophetic words, Mary and Joseph were filled with astonishment. Not that Simeon's utterance

[123] Gen. 46: 30.

[124] Ἀπολύεις.

[125] *"Servum tuum, Domine."* A very strong antithesis, especially in the Greek: on one side, the slave, δοῦλον; on the other, the absolute, almighty master, δέσποτα.

[126] This detail also is quite in conformity with the spirit of the Old Testament. Cfr. Gen. 22: 18; 49: 10; Ps. 99: 1–5; Is. 2: 6; 27: 5; 60: 3, etc.

[127] Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,* I, 199.

[128] See Appendix XVIII.

apprized them of anything new; while not knowing everything about Jesus, they were acquainted with what concerned Him much better than was Simeon. But not without wonderment could they witness the miraculous manifestations that God joined to each of the mysteries of the holy Infancy. How surprised they must have been at hearing this old man, a stranger to them, so exactly describe the glorious future of Jesus!

A glorious future, but not without trial and suffering, as Simeon adds after a short pause. Having finished his canticle, he "blessed" Mary and Joseph, says the sacred text. Here this expression signifies, broadly, that he proclaimed them blessed, felicitated them on having such close relations with a Child called to such an exalted destiny. Then, of a sudden, receiving another revelation from Heaven, he sees the light, which he had just prophesied, darkened by heavy, threatening clouds. Still holding the Child in his arms, he turns to Mary and continues, this time in an accent of deep sadness:

"Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel;
And for a sign which shall be contradicted;
And thy own soul a sword shall pierce,
That out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

Nearly everything is tragic in this emotional, broken utterance, so powerfully contrasting with the words of the canticle. Christ's ministry passes rapidly before Simeon's eyes and, with extreme anguish, he sees Israel's black ingratitude toward the Liberator, who was for him a pledge of so great happiness. This is the first place in the Gospels where there is question of the Messias' sufferings; but later how often we shall hear that note! In His regard, His privileged people will be divided into two diametrically opposite camps: the camp of His friends and that of His foes. The former will recog-

nize Him as their Messias and range themselves obediently under His banner; the others will refuse to believe in Him or to obey His law. He who, in God's mind and according to His own inmost personal desires, was in the first place to save all the Jews, will be, for a great number of them, an indirect and involuntary rock of offense [129] and cause of spiritual ruin. Unfortunately He will thus become "a sign which shall be contradicted." [130] Isaias foretold this double phase of the Messias' coming: "He shall be a sanctification to you. But for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense to the two houses of Israel, for a snare and a ruin to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And very many of them shall stumble and fall, and shall be broken in pieces, and shall be snared and taken." [131] Christ Himself later on declared that His coming into this world had to produce a crisis, a separation of the good from the wicked, since it was not possible to remain neutral in His regard.[132] It is "the scandal of the cross" [133] that brings about this result, by manifesting the inner sentiments of the heart. "Let us open the Gospels, especially that of St. John, where the mystery of Jesus Christ is more completely laid bare: it is the most perfect commentary on Simeon's words. Let us listen to the murmuring among the people: 'Some said: He is a good man. And others said: No, but He seduceth the people . . . Some said, This is the Christ; others said, Doth the Christ come out of Galilee? . . . So there arose a dissension among the people because of him. Many of them said: He hath

[129] This is the meaning of the Greek *εἰς πτῶσιν*, in contrast with *ἀνάστασις* or moral "rising" (Vulg., *in resurrectionem*).

[130] More literally, "a contradicted sign"; a standard around which all true Israelites should gather, but against which a great number, going astray, will rebel.

[131] Is. 8:14 f.

[132] John 9:39; 15:22–25; see also Matt. 21:42–44; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 11:11 f.

[133] 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11.

a devil, and is mad: why hear you him? Others said: These are not the words of one that hath a devil.' " [134]

But only a few days after His birth He was already exposed to contradiction. He was an occasion of ruin for Herod and a cause of resurrection for the shepherds, for the Magi, and for faithful souls. The strife has continued without truce, without relaxation, through the course of the ages, in conformity with that programme, as foretold.[135] Even to-day it is as violent as ever and will last until the end of time.

Mary could not fail to be involved in the sufferings predicted for Christ. The Passion of the Son was to be shared by His mother, whose soul was to be pierced by a sword.[136] Mary must have recalled this terrible prediction more than once; for example, at the time of the flight into Egypt, a little later, when Christ disappeared for three days, still later, when she understood that His life was threatened by cruel enemies whose hatred was daily increasing. But it was especially on Calvary that the sword of sorrow pierced her heart through and through, while she stood near the cross and witnessed the cruel agony of the divine Victim.

"Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius."

Simeon had scarcely finished speaking, when another person, likewise commendable by her virtues and her faith, joined the blessed group, led also by a revelation of the Holy Spirit. The Evangelist gives us a rapid pen sketch of her. She

[134] Bossuet, *Élévations sur les Mystères,* 12th elevation of the 28th week.

[135] Cfr. Heb. 12:3.

[136] The Greek text mentions the ρομφαία, a word designating either the broad sword of the Thracians, as contrasted with the smaller sword of the Romans, or a spear with a sharp iron point.

was Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Aser. Her holiness had merited for her the gift of prophecy. At that time she was eighty-four years old.[137] She had suffered the loss of her husband after seven years of married life, and as a true widow, according to St. Paul's definition,[138] sought consolation in the service of God. After the manner of pious souls, she gave herself up to frequent fasts and constant prayer, which she prolonged far into the night. She passed a considerable part of her time in the Temple courts,[139] being present at the sacrifices and other ceremonies of divine worship. It is not hard to conjecture what was the chief object of her prayers. With all her heart and soul she longed for "the redemption of Israel."[140] Like Simeon, she recognized the Messias in Mary's Child and began to glorify the Lord aloud. Thereafter, whenever an occasion offered, she took delight in speaking of Jesus to all who shared her faith, hope, and love.[141]

[137] More than a hundred years old, according to St. Ambrose and other commentators, who apply the number 84 to the years of Anna's widowhood and add to it either the seven years of her married life or the fifteen years which constituted her age at the time of her marriage ($15 + 7 + 84 = 106$). But this interpretation is not very probable.

[138] 1 Tim. 5:5, 9.

[139] The expression "who departed not from the temple" is evidently a hyperbole.

[140] Another significant phrase designating the Messias. Some Greek and Latin manuscripts have the variant: "the redemption of Jerusalem."

[141] The Rationalists relegate the mystery of Christ's Presentation in the Temple to the domain of legend, along with all the details connected with it. (See Appendix XVIII).

CHAPTER IV

The Visit of the Magi and Its Sequel [142]

I. The Adoration of the Magi

We have previously indicated the simple and natural method of harmonizing the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke in the matter of the chronological order of events composing the history of the Infancy. For this purpose it suffices in some manner to fit the two accounts one into the other without conflict or violence. They are elastic enough to lend themselves to an arrangement of this sort. According to the most likely hypothesis,[143] immediately after Mary's Purification and the redemption of the Divine Infant, we place the arrival of the Magi at Bethlehem, the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, the slaughter of the Innocents, the sojourn of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in a foreign land, and their final settling at Nazareth. In the second century, Tatian adopted this arrangement of the events in his Gospel harmony known as the *Diatessaron;*[144] it is likewise the arrangement which most commentators adopt to-day.

But some have grouped the episodes that form this part of our Savior's infancy in various other ways. According to St. Augustine,[145] the Magi came to Bethlehem only a few days after Christmas (January 6); the mysteries of Mary's Puri-

[142] Appendix XX points out and refutes the Rationalist theories regarding this episode.

[143] See *supra.*

[144] See Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmonia Arabica,* Rome, 1888.

[145] *Sermon.,* CCIII, 1. St. Thomas Aquinas, Suarez, Maldonatus, and others accept this theory.

fication and of Christ's Presentation took place following that, in the manner related by St. Luke; the flight into Egypt and the events connected therewith followed in succession. But it is scarcely credible that Christ's parents went to Jerusalem after the Magi's visit: that would have been uselessly to expose the Infant Savior to the gravest dangers. The following order of events has been preferred by some: Christmas, the Circumcision, the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt and the sojourn there, the return to Palestine after Herod's death, the Purification and Presentation in the Temple, finally the settling at Nazareth. While this scheme is not impossible, it is hardly probable that so large a number of events should have accumulated in the space of the thirty-two days that elapsed between the circumcision of Christ and His mother's Purification. On this hypothesis, the stay in Egypt could scarcely have lasted more than a couple of weeks.

Although the shepherds of Bethlehem were, after Mary and Joseph and the angels, the first adorers of Christ and represented all faithful Israelites at His crib, it was just and quite in conformity with the designs of Providence,—as Simeon called to mind,—that the pagan world should also, at an early date, have its representatives at the side of Him who was bringing salvation to all men without exception. Hence the Magi now hasten to the city of David, as the firstfruits of the Gentile world.

The name *Magi,* which is not at all Semitic, but of Aryan or Indo-Germanic origin,[146] was at that time well known in the Græco-Roman world. St. Matthew mentions it without any explanation, supposing it to be clear to his readers. In the first place, let us note that in Media and Persia the Magi constituted a highly respected sacerdotal caste, engaged in the pursuit of natural sciences, medicine, astronomy (more ex-

[146] The word *mag,* meaning "great, illustrious," has the same etymology as the Greek *μέγας*, the Latin *magnus,* the Sanskrit *maha,* the Persian *magh.*

actly, astrology), as well as in the ceremonies of divine worship.[147] The Bible mentions them as being in Chaldea at the time of Nabuchodonosor. That ruler even conferred on Daniel the title of *Rab-Mag* (*i. e.,* Great Magus) in reward for his services.[148] Their double title of priest and scholar had obtained a notable influence for them in the different classes of society; in several countries they were members of the king's council.[149] It is true that in Our Lord's time their prestige had greatly decreased, because many of them, especially those who had recently settled in considerable numbers in the western provinces of the Empire, being gloomy persons who devoted themselves to the occult arts, exercised scarcely any other function than that of magicians and sorcerers. The Acts of the Apostles mention several examples of this degradation of the name and functions.[150] Nevertheless, it is in a good sense, and according to the ancient acceptation of the term, that St. Matthew here uses the word *Magi,* as is evident from the whole tenor of his account.[151]

At a rather early date a popular tradition, which became almost general at the end of the sixth century, conferred royal dignity on the Magi of the Gospel. There have been falsely applied to them certain Biblical texts, which described in advance, not the particular fact of their visit to the Infant Savior, but, in abstract and figurative terms, the general conversion of the pagans to the religion of the Messias.[152]

[147] Cicero, *De Divin.,* I, i and II, 42: *"Magos . . . quod genus sapientium ac doctorum habetur in Persis."* Cfr. Strabo, XVI, 6; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.,* VI, 123, etc.

[148] Dan. 2:48.

[149] Strabo, XI, ix, 3; XVIII, iii, 1.

[150] Acts 8:9–12, Simon the magician; 13:6–11, Bar-jesu, called Magus.

[151] One feels some surprise at noting that St. Justin (*Dial. cum Tryph.,* 78), Origen (*Contr. Cels.,* I, 60), St. Augustine (*Serm.,* XX, 3–4), and even St. Jerome (*Comm. in Is.,* 19:1), regard the Magi of the Gospel as common magicians, whom grace had converted. St. Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.,* 3 a, qu. 36, art. 3, ad 2, speaks of them as learned sages.

[152] Ps. 71:10: "The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts"; Is: 60:3–6, "The kings

There is nothing in the Gospel narrative to favor this opinion, which is refuted by the most ancient monuments of Christian art, in which the Magi of Bethlehem are never provided with royal emblems, but are simply represented as wealthy Persians.[153]

There has been no end of discussion as to their country, their number, and the exact time of their arrival in Palestine.[154] Whence did they come? St. Matthew, who generally concerns himself very little with topographical and chronological details, answers this question only by a general expression: "Wise men from the east."[155] Hence from the earliest times numerous opinions have been formed to explain it. Some have taken sides for Chaldea, the ancient land of astronomers and astrologers; others have favored the Parthians; others again Persia or the Medes, among whom the caste of Magi originated, as we just said;[156] others favor Arabia because it produces the myrrh and incense which the Magi offered as gifts.[157] The text being so vague and tradition so at disagreement, it is not possible to determine with certitude the country from which the Magi came.

Nor is it possible to determine their exact number, inasmuch as no solid opinion has been established on this question.

[shall walk] in the brightness of thy rising . . . All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense." (See also Ps. 67 : 32.)

[153] See Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes,* 2d ed., pp. 440–442; F. X. Kraus, *Real-Encyklopädie der christl. Altertümer,* II, pp. 348–352.

[154] Full information on these various points will be found in the Bible dictionaries under the word "Magi," and in the following works: Patrizi, S. J., *De Evangeliis Libri Tres,* II, 309–354; H. Kehrer, *Die heiligen drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst,* 2 vols., 1908–1909; Dieterich, *"Die Weisen aus dem Morgenland,"* in the *Zeitschrift für die neutest. Wissenschaft,* 1902, n. 1.

[155] In the Greek ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν, in the plural and without the article. The expression is as vague as it could be.

[156] This is the more common view. Among the Fathers its principal defenders are Origen, *Contr. Cel.,* I, 24; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.,* I, xv, 71; St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth., i. h. l.;* cfr. also the poet Juvencus, *Evang.,* I, 241.

[157] Pope St Clement, I, xxv, 1; St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 77, 78, 88, etc.;

The Syrians, the Armenians, and St. John Chrysostom reckon twelve Magi. Among the Latins we find, at a rather remote period, the number of three, which seems definitely settled since the time of St. Leo the Great. But in all probability it has no other basis than the triple gift made to the Infant Savior by His eastern visitors; or it arose from the legend connecting the Magi with the three great human races, those of Sem, Cham, and Japhet.[158] On early monuments they are represented to the number of two, three, four, or even more.[159]

The same variety of interpretation holds in the matter of the exact time of their journey. Several early authors,[160] basing their calculations on the barbarous action of Herod (who, to be the more sure of not letting his supposed rival escape, ordered the slaughter of all male children at Bethlehem, aged two years or under), suppose that two years elapsed between the birth of Christ and the Magi's visit. But that is an obvious exaggeration. As we pointed out above, most of the Fathers believe, on the contrary, that the Magi's visit to the Savior occurred shortly after His birth. The Gospel text itself favors this opinion, for it shows that no considerable time intervened between Christmas and the arrival of the adorers from the East: "When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem . . . behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star . . . and are come to adore him."

Tertullian, *Adv. Iud.*, 9. But myrrh and incense are found elsewhere than in Arabia, and we are not told that the Magi brought these spices from their home country.

158 Cfr. Nestle, *Marginalien und Materialien*, 1893, II, 65–83; Diekamp, *Hippolytos von Theben*, 1896, pp. 62–66; Bauer, *Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Apokryphen*, pp. 76 f.

159 See Kraus, *op. cit.*

160 Notably Origen, St. Epiphanius, and Eusebius of Caesarea. It is also the view of the apocryphal Gospel falsely attributed to St. Matthew: *"transacto secundo anno."*

Their sudden arrival and eager questioning took place in a milieu which the expectation of the Messias made very impressionable: it aroused the keenest excitement. We will presently describe that disturbance, following the sacred writer's order of events. But first, so as properly to understand the significance of the Magi's words, we must inquire what was the nature of the star that occasioned their distant journey and why, on perceiving this star, they concluded that he whom they called King of the Jews had just been born.

The *mysterious star of the Magi* has always been, and no doubt will ever be, the subject of countless discussions. Was it an ordinary fixed star, making its first appearance at that time, with successive phases—at first a bright splendor, then a temporary eclipse, a brilliant reappearance, and then a sudden disappearance,—which would correspond more or less exactly to the circumstances described by the Evangelist? Or was it a comet, as thought by some who adopt Origen's view? [161] Or was it a conjunction of planets, according to the learned theory of Kepler, which formerly enjoyed a considerable repute and still has some followers? That theory may be briefly stated as follows: "At the close of the year 1603, Kepler pointed out the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, supplemented by Mars the following spring. In the autumn of 1604, a heavenly body, up to then unknown, appeared in the neighborhood of the first two planets. The whole formed a luminous group of very great brightness. Struck with a sudden idea, Kepler made careful investigation as to whether a similar sidereal phenomenon had not occurred about the time of Christ's birth, and his calculations led to the conclusion that a conjunction of the same sort had taken place about 747 A. U. C., and he concluded that that was the star of the Magi. This theory was re-examined, then supplemented and modified

[161] *Contr. Cels.*, I, 58.

by other astronomers. It attracted a great number of scholars and exegetes, who promptly adopted it." [162]

But what a complication in the face of the simple Gospel account! And why do the astronomers who studied this phenomenon after Kepler disagree as to the year when it appeared? Must not the star spoken of by St. Matthew have been rather in the nature of a moving meteor, which appeared, disappeared, advanced, and stopped, without leaving the terrestrial atmosphere, in the manner of the cloud of fire that guided the Hebrews in the desert? [163] Interpreted literally, the Gospel text favors this popular view, which was that of most of the Fathers.[164] In this case there would be question of a supernatural phenomenon, and that again is the impression left by the narrative. Nevertheless, as a miracle is not necessarily and absolutely implied by the terms which St. Matthew employs, one is free to adopt any of the three hypotheses mentioned above, even though they suppose that it all took place in a natural manner.[165]

Note, in the question put by the Magi, the remarkable expression, "His star": [166] the star of the newborn King, the star that, so to speak, designated Him personally and belonged to Him. This trait is in perfect agreement with the ideas of the ancient world, which believed that heavenly phenomena

[162] Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Matthieu,* p. 52. See also F. X. Steinmetzer, *Die Geschichte der Geburt und Kindheit Christi und ihr Verhältnis zur babylonischen Mythe,* 1910, p. 85.

[163] Num. 9:15–23.

[164] Especially St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 106, and St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth., i. h. l.* See also the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* Levi, 18.

[165] Legend was not slow in seizing upon the star of the Magi. St. Ignatius of Antioch (*Epist. ad Eph.,* XIX, 2) says that its brightness exceeded that of all the other stars, including the sun and moon, which danced about it. Or again, it is represented as an angel that appeared to the Magi under the form of a star. See the Arab Gospel of the Infancy, 7; the *Protevangelium Jacobi,* 21; *Pseudo-Matthew,* 13:7 (Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* p. 129; Bauer, *Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestam. Apokryphen,* pp. 78 f.).

[166] In the Greek the pronoun is very emphatic: αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα.

presided over the principal events taking place on earth, and at the birth, during the life, and at the death of great personages.[167]

But as the Magi leisurely contemplated and examined that star, whatever may have been its nature, how did they understand that it was the special star of the King of the Jews, and that this King had just been born? To answer this question, we must bear in mind that at that time there was felt throughout the Roman Empire,—in the East more than elsewhere,—a presentiment, at times precise and then again rather vague, of a new era that was about to open for mankind. Judea was looked upon as the starting-point of this golden age, over which a mighty and glorious personage was to preside. We have already spoken of the great enthusiasm with which the Jews were expecting the Messias at that period. Their whole literature was Messianic, as may be seen from the numerous apocryphal books which stirred up the sacred fire and made the expectancy still more intense. As the sons of Israel had entered into most of the provinces of the Empire, in all places devoting themselves to a very earnest proselytism and making no mystery either of their religion or of their Messias, it is thanks to them that those hopes arose and spread which held so many minds in suspense. The pagan religions were crumbling and falling to pieces. Large numbers of noble souls were joining Judaism in bonds more or less close.

The presentiment of which we speak is explicitly attested by several of the great writers of Rome, particularly Virgil,[168] Tacitus,[169] and Suetonius,[170] as well as by the Jewish histo-

[167] See the historian Justin, *Histor.,* XXXVI, Suetonius, *Caesar,* LXXXVIII, etc. This belief existed in Assyria and Chaldea more than anywhere else, as we see from the cuneiform inscriptions. Cfr. Steinmetzer, *op. cit.,* pp. 87–90.

[168] *Eclog.,* IV, 4–59. This celebrated passage is thought to have been suggested by the Sibylline Oracles, III, 784–794.

[169] *Hist.,* V, 13.

[170] *Vespas.,* IV.

rian Flavius Josephus.[171] The ancient astronomical tablets of Babylon showed great interest in Palestine. They contain predictions like this: "When such or such a thing comes to pass, a great king will arise in the West," and with him a veritable golden age will begin.[172]

This historical sketch explains that there were, as far away as the distant East, men who were expecting the liberator of mankind and who were seeking in the stars,—where it was thought one could read everything and find out everything,—the premonitory signs of his coming. The Magi were of this number; and so, when they suddenly perceived, in the wonderfully clear sky of their country, an astral phenomenon that seemed to them of the nature of a prodigy, they regarded it as a sign and at once established a close relation between it and the birth of the future Redeemer. For those astronomers the star was, according to St. Augustine's beautiful thought,[173] a visible language, quite capable of attracting their attention and stirring their faith. But evidently, to that language from without was added a much clearer message, a divine revelation which made its meaning precise and urged them to go and offer their homage in person to the King of the Jews.[174]

Let us remark, in passing, the wondrous ways of God, who

[171] *Bell. Iud.*, I, v, 4. see Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, II, 518 f.; Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, pp. 212 f.

[172] Steinmetzer, *op. cit., passim.*

[173] *Sermon.*, CCI, 2.

[174] St. Augustine, *Sermon.*, XCVII: *"Stellam Christi esse cognoverunt per aliquam revelationem."* St. Leo, *Serm. de Epiph, IV: "Dedit Deus aspicientibus intellectum, qui praestitit signum."* According to Origen, *Contr. Cels.*, I, 60, the Magi knew of Balaam's prophecy: "A star shall rise out of Jacob and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel" (Num. 24: 17), and this prophecy helped in forming their conviction. But that seems unlikely. Further, it is commonly admitted that in this oracle there is no question of a real star, intended to announce the Messias' coming. The word "star" is used in a figurative sense, to designate the Messias Himself. St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*, IX, 2. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, ix, 2, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstr. Evang.*, IX, i, 1–10, establish the same relationship as Origen does, between the star and Balaam's prophecy.

providentially adapts His graces and inspirations to the inner dispositions of those whom He deigns to draw to Himself. Later on we shall see Christ winning Galilean fishermen by miraculous drafts of fishes, the sick by cures, the doctors of the law by explanations of Scripture texts. We now see Him summoning the Magi, *i. e.*, astronomers, by a star in the firmament.

The inquiry which the Magi made in Jerusalem, although apparently so harmless, at once produced an impression which they were far from having foreseen. The star had revealed to them the birth of the King of the Jews, but it had not indicated the exact spot where they could find Him. They had, therefore, come directly to Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish Kingdom, confident of obtaining reliable information there. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews," they asked, "for we have seen his star in the east,[175] and are come to adore him."[176]

In a few brief words the sacred writer dramatically describes the effect produced in the city by the unexpected news brought by the Magi. Flying from mouth to mouth, it soon crossed the threshold of the royal palace, arousing keen elation or frantic alarm: "and King Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Many a time and oft, and for less serious reason, had the old despot trembled for his life and his usurped throne. He was King of Palestine, not by right, but through intrigue and violence, detested by most of his subjects because of his tyranny and his anti-

[175] Several recent exegetes prefer to translate the words ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ by "at its rising," *i. e.*, at the moment when the star, whatever it was, became visible. But it seems that if the Evangelist had had this meaning in mind, he would have added the possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ.

[176] Προσκυνεῖν—literally, to prostrate ourselves before Him. It is by this act that Orientals pay homage to their kings and other great personages. Cfr. Gen. 27:29; 33:3, 6 f.; 37:7. See Fillion, *Atlas Archéologique de la Bible*, 2d ed., pl. LXXIX, fig. 9; pl. XCVI, fig. 7.

theocratic conduct, and extremely jealous of his authority. And now he suddenly learns that he has a powerful rival, the Messias Himself, and in anguish he wonders whether he will be able successfully to combat Him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had likewise their reasons for being troubled. Their excitement was caused, on the one hand, by the thought that they were about to see the realization of the Messianic hopes which were thrilling all hearts, and, on the other hand, by a fear of the blood that Herod would probably shed in order to save his crown.[177]

The King recovered himself very quickly. His cleverness did not fail him in these delicate circumstances. He was no less anxious than the Magi to ascertain where this rival of his was living. Without losing a moment's time, he took two steps—one official and public, the other secret—which would, he thought, reveal that information with certainty. He concealed his anger and, as it was primarily a religious fact, he convoked the great ecclesiastical council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin,[178] in extraordinary session, and put the plain question: "Where should Christ be born?" The answer was easy, and the King would have been able to answer it himself, had he not been more Idumean than Jew. Those to whom he put the question answered it at once, clearly and briefly: "In

[177] According to some commentators, the disturbance in the city was of the same nature as that in the mind of the king. This interpretation seems to us unnatural. If the tyrant had a considerable number of partisans at Jerusalem, he was far from having the sympathies of a majority of the inhabitants. The Pharisees especially detested him heartily.

[178] On its organization and jurisdiction, see *supra*. As the Evangelist here mentions only the chief priests and Scribes or doctors of the law, it has sometimes been thought that these two classes of the high assembly were the only ones convoked by Herod, seeing that the answer to his question was particularly in their jurisdiction. But because of the importance of the subject to be treated it seems more probable that it was a plenary session and that the ancients or notables were likewise present. Furthermore St. Matthew does not mention all the classes of the Sanhedrin even on occasions when the meeting was certainly a complete one. (Cfr. Matt. 20:18; 26:59; 27:1).

Bethlehem of Juda." And they justified their reply by an utterance of the prophet Micheas, quoting its words rather freely, but its meaning very correctly, as frequently happens in the Gospels: "And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel." [179]

Herod was now in possession of two certain data. He had learned, through the Magi, that the Messias was born, through the Sanhedrin, the exact location of His birthplace. He desired a third bit of information that would enable him to carry out the homicidal project already stirring in his mind. He therefore called the Magi together secretly so as not to arouse attention, and with the greatest care informed himself [180] as to the exact time when the star appeared to them. He surmised that some connection existed between that date and the date of the Messias' birth. Then, sending the Magi to Bethlehem, he told them: "Go and diligently inquire after the child, and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him."

The Magi delayed not in taking the road to Bethlehem. Their joy was unbounded [181] when, upon leaving Jerusalem, they saw before them, brighter than ever, the star which had appeared to them in the East, but which had afterwards vanished. Moreover, everyone in their country knew the road leading to Palestine.[182] It was evening and the kindly star

[179] Mich. 5:2. The prophet's thought was this: Although Bethlehem is too insignificant to be reckoned among the principal cities of the tribe of Juda, yet it will have the glory of giving birth to the Messias. The Evangelist, slightly modifying the text, says: Bethlehem is not an insignificant town, since the Messias will be born there. The sense, then, is the same in both cases.

[180] The Greek ἠκρίβωσε (Vulg., *diligenter didicit*) well expresses this thought.

[181] "They rejoiced with exceeding great joy," says the sacred text, making use of an expressive Hebraicism.

[182] It is not at all necessary to suppose that the star had guided the Magi on their way to Jerusalem.

advanced before them,[183] not only showing them the route to be followed, but making it plain to them that they had not been misled and that they were approaching the desired goal. Suddenly the star stopped, casting its rays upon an humble dwelling in the little town, the house,—as the travelers at once understood,—which sheltered the King whom they had come to seek. We know from St. Luke's account that Christ was born in a stable. If St. Matthew speaks of a house, it is no doubt because, after the pressure of the first days, which had brought so many outsiders to Bethlehem on account of the census, Joseph was able to procure more suitable lodging.

Can we not imagine the Magi's emotion as, "entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him"? In these words of exquisite simplicity the Evangelist relates the meeting of the Oriental visitors with the King of the Jews, the King of the whole world. Should we take literally the words, "they adored him," and understand this expression in its full and complete theological significance? Taken by itself, the expression means only a very respectful homage, shown by the humble attitude of prostration. Nevertheless, everything leads us to believe that the Magi, receiving a still more specific revelation from Heaven, recognized the divine nature of Mary's Son and adored Him as the true Son of God. The holy Fathers entertain no doubts in the matter.[184]

These fervent adorers of Christ did not permit themselves to be influenced by the outward circumstances, which at first sight seemed so unfavorable for the Divine Infant. Neither His poverty nor His seeming helplessness nor His silence put any obstacle in the way of their faith. The presents which

[183] Or, at least, appeared to advance, if the star was a purely natural phenomenon.

[184] St. Augustine, *Sermon.*, CC.: *"Isti in parvis membris Deum adoraverunt."* Cfr. St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth.*, VIII; Knabenbauer, *Commentar. in Evangel. sec. Matth.*, 2d ed., I, 99 f.

they offered to Jesus, according to the ancient custom of the East, which does not permit anyone to approach a great personage empty-handed, are another pledge of the fullness of their simple and generous faith: "Opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."[185] In their minds, these gifts certainly had a symbolic meaning, which the earliest ecclesiastical writers have indicated with some differences. The most usual and most natural interpretation is that designated in the strophe of the Christmas prose:

"Auro rex agnoscitur,
Homo myrrha colitur,
Thure Deus gentium."[186]

The Magi seem to have made a very short stay at Bethlehem. The Gospel account would almost give us to understand that they passed only a few hours there. In their frankness they had taken Herod's hypocritical protestations seriously and were prepared to return to Jerusalem to bring him the information he had requested. But the cruel tyrant's scheme was thwarted by God, who, in a supernatural dream, enjoined the travelers to take a different route for their return journey. They promptly obeyed and disappeared mysteriously, as they had come. From Bethlehem there is no lack of roads going east

[185] Incense and myrrh are perfumed resinous gums which, when burning, diffuse a very fine odor that Orientals particularly delight in. These gums are gathered from trees belonging to the family of *Burseraceae*. Incense is produced by several varieties of the *Boswellia*, which grows in Arabia, Bengal, Ethiopia, etc.; myrrh, by the *Balsamodendron myrrha*, which is found in Arabia and various places bordering on the Red Sea. See Fillion, *Atlas d'Histoire Naturelle de la Bible*, pp. 35 f., and pl. XXXII, fig. 7; pl. XXXIII, fig. 4; pl. XXXIV, fig. 4; pl. XXXV, fig. 6.

[186] See St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, ix, 2; Origen, *Contr. Cels.*, I, 60. This was also the opinion of St. Hilary, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, etc. The poet Juvencus (*Evang.*, I, 249 f.) thus expresses it in verse:

"Thus, aurum, myrrham, regique hominique Deoque
Dono ferunt."

to the other side of the Jordan, by which to reach the plateau of Moab, where the eastern caravans passed.

Attention has often been drawn to the striking contrast between the conduct of these pagans and that of the Jews of Jerusalem, respecting the new born Messias. As we previously remarked, it is the fulfilment of Simeon's prophecy. Judaism rejects Jesus; the Gentile world welcomes Him. The Magi undertake a long and wearisome journey to come to adore Him; Herod wishes to take the life of Christ. The chief priests and Scribes confine themselves to indicating the place where He was to be born. Like mile-posts that mark the highway but do not leave their place, so they do not think of inconveniencing themselves to go to Him. What prospects, one filled with hope, the other with sadness, for the future of the Divine Master and His Church! Israel is rejected through its own fault and cedes to the pagan world the privileged rank which the divine plan had so bountifully accorded to it.[187]

II. The Flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents

Danger hovered above the Christ Child; but God did not abandon Him to Herod's cruelty. The very night of the Magi's departure from Bethlehem, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying: "Arise, and take the Child and his mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy him." The message was urgent, as was the danger. Joseph understood this; so, without asking any further explanation, he takes the Child and mother, those two beings who were so dear to him, and rapidly directs his steps toward Egypt. What exemplary obedience was his, ever so prompt and unreserved, although calling for hard and trying deeds!

From Bethlehem several well-known routes led to the coun-

[187] See similar indications in Matt. 3:9; 11:12; 21:43; 22:5–10; 24:14; 28:19.

try of the Pharaohs. The shortest, which was also the least irksome and the most frequented, led first to Ascalon and Gaza, in the ancient territory of the Philistines; then to Raphia, from which point it followed the Mediterranean coast as far as Casuim and Pelusa in lower Egypt.[188] But this road was less safe for the fugitives, because on that route Herod's police could easily overtake them before they would have time to cross the frontiers. Hence it is probable that Joseph turned his steps first toward the southern boundary of Palestine, by way of Hebron and Bersabee, and then plunged into the desert of Pharan,[189] which was crossed by several fairly direct routes. It was only after six or seven days of fatiguing travel that the Holy Family entered the ancient province of Gessen, that had been inhabited for so long a period by the Hebrews.[190] From there, according to a venerable tradition, after a stop not far from Heliopolis, at a place now called Matariyeh,[191] they reached Memphis, where they settled down for the entire duration of their sojourn in Egypt. The Coptic church of Old Cairo is built, so it is said, on the site of the house in which they dwelt.[192]

Although Egypt was plunged in paganism, it had been designated to Joseph because it was the most convenient place for escaping Herod's trap. It was then directly subject to Rome, and the tyrant had not the least jurisdiction over it. Since the time of the reign of Ptolemy Lagi (B. C. 283), large

[188] See Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible,* pl. V.

[189] *"Per viam eremi,"* says Pseudo-Matth., 17 : 2.

[190] On the legendary vicissitudes of this journey, see the Arab Gospel of the Infancy, chaps. 9–25; the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, chaps. 17–24; Hofmann, *Das Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* pp. 140–179; Diekamp, *Hippolytos von Theben,* pp. 67–72, etc.

[191] The ancient Matarea, six miles northeast of Cairo. At that place there is still a venerable sycamore, a descendant—three generations removed—of that which is supposed to have given a little shade to the Infant Christ.

[192] *La Palestine,* by professors of Notre-Dame de France à Jérusalem, 2d ed., pp. 685–688.

numbers of Jewish immigrants had settled there: some to engage in commercial enterprises; others, more recently, to find shelter from Herod's fury. At the time when the Holy Family arrived there, the Jews formed a flourishing colony, especially at Alexandria, Heliopolis, and Leontopolis. In the last-named city they had built a magnificent temple about 160 B. C. This temple was so large, as the Talmud naïvely says, that the voice of the officiating minister could not reach its limits; hence an assistant had to wave a veil to notify those present when they were to respond *Amen* to the different prayers. Among these Jews were to be found a large number of workmen, who were organized into associations according to their various trades and provided mutual help for their members in case of sickness or unemployment.[193] In the district where the Holy Family stayed, they could, therefore, find the help and protection which they needed.

Herod, however, was on the watch. With ever growing impatience and anxiety he waited for the Magi's return to Jerusalem and the answer they had promised. When he grasped, after some delay, that they would not come back,—it was easy for his police to ascertain that they had left Judea,—he looked upon this proceeding as a gross insult and a treacherous plot to dethrone him in favor of his rival, and abandoned himself to one of those blind excesses of rage to which he was more than ever subject towards the end of his life. Putting aside all pretense, even all prudence, he hastened the accomplishment of his barbarous vengeance. He sent forth the soldiers of his guard, whom he employed in place of ordinary executioners, with orders to massacre, not only within the town of Bethlehem, but also in the hamlets and isolated houses of the neighborhood, all male children two years old and under, according to the information the Magi had given him regarding

[193] Babyl. Talmud, Succa, 21, b; cfr. Delitzsch, *Handwerkerleben zur Zeit Jesu*, p. 38; Fillion, *Essais d'Exégèse*, pp. 251 f., 258.

the time when the star had appeared to them. He hoped, by enlarging the scope of his orders, from the double point of view of space and time, that He whom they had dared in his presence to style "the King of the Jews," would not escape him. He was no believer in half-measures, and the blood of his subjects was never very precious in his eyes.

The cruel sentence was cruelly carried out. Naturally it has often been wondered how large was the number of the innocent victims who had the privilege of being the first martyrs of Christ. At times it has been exaggerated by fixing the figure at 3,000, nay, even at 144,000.[194] Statistics will furnish us fairly accurate information. By granting to Bethlehem a population of about 2,000 souls and by supposing, in accord with the usual facts, that for each thousand of population there are annually about thirty births, nearly equally divided between the two sexes, we obtain a figure of fifteen male children for one year, thirty for two years. Most interpreters regard even this figure as too high and are of opinion that the massacre included not more than fifteen or twenty victims.

A horrible crime it was, whatever its proportions. The sacred writer, by one of those juxtapositions that he so frequently employs between facts of the Gospel and Old Testament facts, accentuates the event: "A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." [195] Like the previous quotation, taken from Micheas, this passage is quoted rather freely, either from the Hebrew original or the Septuagint translation; but it well reproduces the prophet's thought. Jeremias has been describing, in brilliant terms,[196] the future reëstablishment of the Jewish people

[194] This last figure is that of the Ethiopic liturgy and the Greek menologies, which apply literally (and quite wrongly) to the Holy Innocents the text of Apoc. 14: 1, which is sung by the Church on their feastday.

[195] Jer. 31: 15.

[196] Jer. 31: 1–14.

and the end of the Babylonian exile. Suddenly he interrupts his description and returns to the grievous time in which he is living and in spirit contemplates one of the bitterest scenes of all Jewish history. Not long before, after the decisive victory of Nabuchodonosor's soldiers and the fall of the Kingdom of Juda, those Jews who were to be deported to Chaldea were assembled at Rama,[197] a small town about five miles north of Jerusalem and still called *er Ram* to-day. In a dramatic prosopopeia, the prophet pictures Rachel coming forth from her tomb located near Bethlehem[198] on the Jerusalem road—probably on the spot where it is still pointed out—and crying out in mournful lamentation, like a disconsolate mother whose children have been snatched from her. In that ancient mourning of Rachel, the ancestress of the Jewish people, St. Matthew sees the anticipated image of the grief of the mothers of Bethlehem whose children the executioners of Herod have slain. In his eyes this text of Jeremias, independently of its first historical sense, had a second and typical one, very real and intended by the Holy Ghost. In applying it to the massacre of the Innocents, he fitly sets off Herod's criminal barbarity.

III. The Holy Family Returns from Egypt and Settles at Nazareth

Herod did not long enjoy the artificial security which his revolting deed had procured for him. He died, according to Josephus,[199] in the early days of April, 760 A. U. C. (the fourth year of our era), a short time after the massacre of the Innocents, at the age of seventy, having reigned for thirty-seven years. One cannot help but see the avenging hand of God in the horrible suffering he had to go through in his last illness. The

[197] Jer. 40: 1.
[198] Gen. 35: 19.
[199] *Ant.*, XVII, viii, 1.

Jewish historian relates that "a fire glowed in him slowly. It brought upon him a vehement appetite, which he could not avoid gratifying with one sort of food or other. His entrails were ulcerated. An aqueous and transparent liquor had settled itself about his feet and a like matter afflicted him in the region of his abdomen. When he sat upright he had difficulty in breathing, which was very loathsome on account of the stench of his breath. He had convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree. Having no longer the least hope of recovery, and knowing that his death would be a thing very much desired by the Jews and exceedingly acceptable to them, he grew so choleric that he did all things like a madman. He commanded that all the principal men of the entire Jewish nation be shut up in the hippodrome at Jericho and directed his sister Salome that, as soon as he had given up the ghost, orders should be given to slay them, in order that there would be great mourning at his funeral. But Salome did not carry out his order. As his pains were becoming very great and he was now ready to faint for want of something to eat, he had a mind to stab himself with a knife and would have done it had he not been prevented. But at length he died, in the thirty-seventh year of his reign." [200] We can understand why Lactantius quoted this tragic page in his treatise "On the Death of the Persecutors" of the Church. Herod had a splendid funeral. His corpse, lying on a golden litter, dressed in purple and precious stones and bearing the scepter and crown, with incense burning around it, was brought from Jericho to Herodium [201] by a truly royal cortège; [202] but the curse of his people, as that of God, rested upon him.

The divine messenger reappeared to Joseph and directed him

[200] Josephus, *Ant.*, XVII, vi, 5–6.
[201] On the summit of the Djebel Foreidis.
[202] Josephus, *Ant.*, XVII, viii, 3; *Bell. Iud.*, I, xxxiii, 9.

to return to Palestine,[203] as the time of his exile had come to an end. "Arise," he said, "and take the Child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the death of the Child." [204] Joseph arose, took the Child and His mother, and returned to Palestine, blessing God. After mentioning this happy event, St. Matthew quotes another Old Testament text, in which he sees a prophetic type of Jesus' return to the Holy Land. Christ's stay in the land of exile had occurred, according to the divine intention, that this saying of the prophet Osee "might be fulfilled": "Out of Egypt have I called my son." [205] The prophet had just forcefully described Israel's ingratitude to God. He then pointed out God's tireless love in contrast with their increasing acts of idolatry and numberless deeds of disobedience. As proof of that fatherly love, he mentioned their deliverance from the yoke of the Egyptians, that immense prodigy which begins the history of the Hebrews as the chosen nation: "Because Israel was a child, and I loved him: and I called my son out of Egypt." [206] What formerly came to pass for Israel, whom the Lord deigns to call His son in a figurative sense, likewise came to pass for Christ, Son of God in the strictest sense of the word. The destiny of the adopted son was thus the type of that of the true Son: both were led into Egypt and both were recalled under special circumstances, similar in more than one respect. The historic parallel suggested by the Evangelist is, therefore, not unfounded.

How long did the Holy Family sojourn in Egypt? St. Matthew tells us their painful exile ended with Herod's death;

[203] Matt. 2: 13.

[204] These last words are likely a reminiscence of Ex. 4: 19, where God uses them to tell Moses that he should return to Egypt. The royal plural is used to designate Herod or Pharaoh; or it is the categorical plural (the persecutors of Jesus or Moses).

[205] Osee 11: 1.

[206] Cf. Ex. 4: 22 f.; Jer. 31: 9, etc.

but he does not fix the exact time when it began. Furthermore, we do not know precisely the date of the Savior's birth. Hence it is not possible to determine with certainty the duration of the sojourn of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in that foreign land. From early times the most contradictory opinions have been held on this point. The duration in question was not more than a few weeks, according to the authors who place the Magi's visit and its sequel before the Presentation of Christ in the Temple; eight to ten years, according to other early interpreters; at least two or three years, according to the opinion which seems to us the most acceptable.[207]

In directing Joseph to leave Egypt, the angel simply designated "the land of Israel" as the place of his future residence. Therefore, after returning to Palestine, Joseph seems to have first thought of settling in the province of Judea; no doubt, at Bethlehem, where the Savior had been born in a manner so manifestly providential. But when, after crossing the border, he learned that Judea had come by inheritance to Archelaus, the eldest of Herod's sons,[208] he abandoned that plan, fearing to expose Christ to new perils. His fear was but too well founded. No one in Palestine was unaware that this ruler was as suspicious and cruel as his father. In the very first days of his rule he suppressed the beginning of a popular uprising that took place in the Temple courts, by having three thousand pilgrims massacred by his horsemen.[209] Consequently his subjects hastened to send to Rome a delegation composed of fifty members to obtain his removal from office.[210]

By another supernatural dream, God approved the resolve

[207] See Knabenbauer, *Comment. in Evangel. Matth.*, 2d ed., I, 107; Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen*, p. 182; A. Resch, *Das Kindheitsevangelium*, pp. 165–167; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu*, p. 84.

[208] We explained above under what circumstances Herod's succession was regulated by the Emperor Augustus.

[209] Josephus, *Ant.*, XVII, ix, 3.

[210] *Bell. Iud.*, II, vi, 1–3.

of Christ's foster-father and at the same time indicated Galilee as the part of Palestine where he should settle with the precious treasure entrusted to him. The tetrarch Herod Antipas, who had received that province as his share, was a benevolent ruler, who endeavored to win the confidence of his subjects by assuring them a calm and happy existence.[211] Joseph, being directed to Galilee by God Himself, did not hesitate as to the place where he would settle, since, before Christ's birth, he had been living with Mary at Nazareth. So it was there he settled, as in a gentle, holy retreat, where the Infant Savior could grow up in peace after so many perils and fatigues.

In this second settling at Nazareth, the Evangelist sees another fulfilment of the ancient oracles. He says that "coming he [Joseph] dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: that he shall be called a Nazarene." It is noteworthy that the expression by which St. Matthew introduces his citation is very general. It is not from Isaias, Jeremias, Osee, or any other prophet, but from all the prophets together. This fact explains why nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the words, "He shall be called a Nazarene." The sacred writer, this time, did not have in mind any special prophecy, but rather an idea expressed by the *ensemble* of the prophets regarding the Messias and realized by the settling of the Holy Family at Nazareth. What was that idea? Various hypotheses have been offered to explain it. Before examining them, let us first say that here the Evangelist evidently indulges in a play on words by making, in connection with the name of Nazareth and the epithet "Nazarene," [212] one of the characteristically Oriental combinations which the sacred writers occasionally indulge in as regards proper names. In fact, as we have amply established,[213] Jesus is

[211] See Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 3d ed., I, 431 f.
[212] *Nαζωραῖος* (Vulg., *Nazaraeus*).
[213] See Appendix XIV.

often called "Jesus of Nazareth" in the Gospel narrative, and even on the cross he is surnamed "Nazarene." But it is morally certain that, according to the Hebraic spelling of the word Nazareth, the *"z"* was represented by the letter *tsade,* equivalent to our *ts.* The Talmud furnishes proof of this, since in derision, it calls Jesus *"ha-Notseri," i. e.,* the inhabitant of Nazareth. The root of the name of this town is therefore *natsar,* meaning: "to be verdant, to sprout, to blossom," as St. Jerome charmingly says: "We will go to Nazareth and, according to the meaning of its name, we will see the Flower of Galilee." [214] Moreover, as the same learned scholar remarks, [215] Isaias expressly attributes to the Messias the figurative name of *netser,* "branch, verdant bough," in a famous passage: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse,[216] and a flower shall rise up out of his root." [217] Moreover, Isaias, Jeremias, and Zacharias,[218] in designating the future Liberator, use a similar expression, *tsémahh,* which means "bud." It is, then, to these prophetic passages that St. Matthew very probably alludes.

A likeness has been noted between the word "Nazarene," in which the Evangelists see an anticipated name of the Messias, and the Hebrew noun *nazir,* "consecrated" to God by the vow of the Nazirite, like Samson.[219] But Christ was never *nazir* in this sense, and besides, that substantive, though it might serve to form the derivative adjective "Nazirene," [220] could not have served as root for "Nazarene."

The Evangelist, therefore, means that the town of Nazar-

[214] *Epist.* XLVI, *ad Marcell.* See Fillion, *Essais d'Exégèse,* pp. 211 f.; Zahn, *Evangelium des Mathäus,* 2d ed., p. 112, note.

[215] In his commentary on Isaias, 11:1.

[216] Jesse was David's father.

[217] Is. 11:1.

[218] Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5 and 33:15; Zach. 3:8 and 6:12.

[219] Cfr. Num. 6:1–21; Judges 13:5, etc. This was the opinion of Tertullian, *Contr. Marc.,* IV, 8, and of Eusebius, *Demonstr. Evang.,* VII, ii, 46–51.

[220] We meet it here and there in the Septuagint (*ναζιραῖος*). Cfr. Judges 13:5 and Lament. 4:5.

eth was predestined by its very name to receive in its bosom, so as to guard it, protect it, and see it grow, the divine "bud" which was confided to it for many years. Consequently, the choice of that home for the Incarnate Word was not a mere matter of chance, but an event altogether providential.[221]

[221] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 223, therefore has no right to say: "We do not know what St. Matthew meant." Strauss, *Vie Nouvelle de Jésus*, II, 81 f.; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 374; Clemen, *Geschichtliches im Leben Jesu*, p. 60, and others, are also wrong in the remarks which they make on this head.

BOOK II

The Hidden Life of the Savior

CHAPTER I

To the Age of Thirty

I. The Scene of the Savior's Hidden Life

On three occasions we have been present at miraculous manifestations that accompanied certain incidents of the Holy Infancy. The Savior's crib was celebrated by angels and visited by shepherds; in the Temple, at the time of His Presentation, the Messias was recognized and hailed by the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna; and lastly, we have seen the Magi hasten from the East to adore Him. All that was part of a providential design. But it would be a mistake to suppose that these manifestations were merely the first rays of a dawn that was to usher in a constantly resplendent period in Christ's life. No; those rays promptly gave way, even at Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to a deep night. It was needful that Christ's infancy should have its witnesses; but it did not enter into the divine plan that Jesus should be immediately revealed to all men by an unbroken series of wonders. For long years to come He was to lead a hidden life, whose mysteries we must now consider. Almost complete silence surrounds Him, to such a degree that the inhabitants of Nazareth, among whom He grows up and attains maturity, look upon Him as a simple carpenter.

If we inquire, with all the respect due to God's designs, into the purpose of that silence and obscurity, we find two chief reasons. It would be a mistake, in the first place, to exaggerate the extent of the fame or reverberation of the extraordinary manifestations which we have been considering. The shepherds were the only ones who heard the angels' song, and those to

whom they imparted the glad tidings of the Messias' birth belonged to a lowly circle like their own, a group that certainly remained very limited. We said, in connection with the Magi, that the Gospel knows nothing of a rich and numerous caravan filing through the streets of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and that the account leaves an impression that the pious visitors made only a brief stay in the city of David. It was also to very limited and naturally calm circles that the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna regarding the Savior came. The impression occasioned thereby did not extend very far. The grief caused by the massacre of the little children, the immediate disappearance of the Holy Family, the stir, in a different sense, produced by Herod's death and Archelaus' barbarous vengeance,[222] promptly stifled the talk that there was in Judea for a few days about the newborn Messias. It took but a short time for it all to fade out.[223]

A moment's reflection suffices to reveal the deeper motive for which it pleased Divine Providence to cast a veil over the bright incidents which St. Matthew and St. Luke relate. "It does not enter into His plans that the manifestation of Christ should be made in a violent fashion, forcing itself on men's minds. This work must give full play to human freedom; there will be enough light so that men of good will can be enlightened, but not so much that evil men shall be dazzled and violently forced, so to speak, in their faith. . . . Yet, the first awakening has taken place, attention has been aroused, and when, thirty years later, John the Baptist and Christ begin their ministry, they will find a large number of hearts well prepared." [224]

Let us now pass to Nazareth and attempt to describe this

[222] *Supra,* pp. 358, 360.

[223] Cfr. Cremer, *Das Wesen des Christentums,* p. 150; Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas,* p. 170.

[224] Lepin, *Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu, d'après les Synoptiques,* 1904, pp. 56 f. These remarks were necessary to reply to a special objection of the critics. War-

humble town, chosen by God to shelter the Christ during the long years of His preparation for the rôle of Redeemer. Imagine a high plateau, representing the province of Galilee.[225] Before abruptly disappearing in the plain of Esdraelon, the mountains which cover it with their varied undulations, the last southern foothills of Lebanon, separate themselves and form a sort of basin, a narrow but graceful valley which they seem jealously desirous of protecting. It is in this valley, appropriately compared by some travelers to a well-sheltered nook, that Nazareth was built, or rather carefully hid. Bethlehem rises proudly above its two hills. Nazareth, on the contrary, seems to want to conceal itself behind its crown of mountains. Thus you hardly see it until you are almost in it. The town, however, is not at the very bottom of the valley, although its last houses do reach that far. It spreads out like an amphitheatre along the slope of the principal elevation, called *Neby Sain,*[226] up to the point where the latter rises somewhat steeply above the valley, reaching a height of 1590 feet.

Thus did Nazareth appear to pilgrims in ancient times. Phocas in the twelfth century wrote: "It is built amidst hills of different heights, in the depths of the valley which they form." [227] This little valley extends from south-southwest to north-northeast; you can travel the length of it in twenty minutes, its breadth in less than ten. It is about 900 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, more than 300 feet above

schauer, for example, says: "Was it possible for one whose early days had been marked by so many marvelous signs, to have been allowed to reach manhood in obscurity? Would he not have been pointed out during all the days of his boyhood and youth as the wonder-child, over whose birthplace a star had rested?" (*Jesus: Seven Questions,* p. 78). Cfr. Loisy, *Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 350; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 226; Schmidt, *Studien und Kritiken,* 1889, p. 459, etc.

[225] See A. Legendre, *Carte de la Palestine Ancienne et Moderne pour servir à l'Histoire de la Bible.*

[226] Or Neby Said, or Neby Ismail.

[227] Cited by Reland, *Palaestina ex Monumentis Veteribus Illustrata,* 1714.

the plain of Esdraelon. It was fertile and in general well cultivated. Its fields and gardens enjoyed a fine reputation about the end of the sixth century and St. Antoninus Martyr mentions them in his Itinerary, comparing their bloom to that of Eden.[228]

Seen at a distance, the town, reposing in this pleasant situation, presents a charming view, which it must have possessed also in Our Lord's time. The houses are arranged in irregular steps. There are no doubt now, and there were then, much more than to-day, wretched hovels of the poor; but most of the dwellings are well built. Their walls are usually constructed of square stones and rest on solid rock; at times several feet of earth have been excavated in order to reach bed rock, as if men would, in the city of Christ, exemplify the beautiful comparison which closes the Sermon on the Mount.[229] This was a necessary precaution, because of the impetuous torrents that come raging down the hillsides in the rainy season and which beat against the buildings with dreadful fury. As timber is now lacking in the neighborhood of Nazareth, most of the rooms are vaulted. The roofs as a rule are flat, as in the greater part of Palestine. It is sad to relate that the highest building in Nazareth, near which the campanile of the Annunciation Basilica makes a humble figure, is the slender minaret of the Mussulman mosque.

The interior of the town is far from measuring up to the hopes that are conceived by a view from outside. Like most Oriental cities, Nazareth in this respect proves truly deceptive to the pilgrim. The streets are narrow and winding, steep and slippery, nearly everywhere dirty.

The population of Nazareth could never have been very considerable. Yet it is rapidly growing these last few years. At present it is about 10,000, a third of whom is made up of

[228] "*Paradiso similem* [*regionem*]."
[229] Matt. 7:24–27; Luke 6:47 f.

Mohammedans, another third of Greek Schismatics, and the last third of different denominations of Catholics.[230] Although Jews are numerous in the neighboring districts, you do not meet a single one at Nazareth. However, in the first centuries of the Christian era, St. Epiphanius reports that [231] the city of Christ was inhabited solely by Israelites, who did not allow any Christians to settle there.

Most of the inhabitants are peacefully engaged in farming, as were their forefathers at the beginning of our era. Several devote themselves successfully to horticulture. Fruit trees, —pomegranates, fig trees, orange trees, grape vines,—produce abundant harvests, while their verdure adorns the city and its surroundings. The climate is healthful and the temperature usually mild, although frost is not unknown in winter.

We have purposely spoken at length of the modern *En-Nasira,* because the Nazareth of Our Lord, which the Evangelists distinctly call "city," [232] must have differed from it hardly at all, except in that it was notably smaller and less populous.

At its two opposite extremities are to be seen the Franciscan monastery and the city well: the former is at the southern end of the town, and its big, dark walls encircle the rich and precious Basilica of the Annunciation with its crypt, the witness of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word; at the northwest extremity is the ancient well, which has been in use through all the periods of the city's history, to which, consequently, Mary came every day to draw the water needed by the Holy Family. There is life and activity morning and evening around this *"Ain Mariam,"* [233] while the Nazarene women, often accompanied by their young children, wait for their

230 There are about 250 Protestants at Nazareth.
231 *Haer.,* I.
232 Πόλις; Matt. 2:23; Luke 4:29.
233 "Mary's well."

turn and exchange the latest bit of news! There you can verify the remark which St. Antoninus [234] made, and which numerous travelers have since repeated: that the women of Nazareth excel in gracefulness and beauty all others of Palestine.[235]

To form a general idea of the city and its environs, let us climb by way of its steepest streets, the side of the hill to which it clings. A quarter of an hour brings us to the top of the *Neby Sain* and there a pleasant surprise awaits us. A superb panorama spreads out before our eyes. It is assuredly one of the most beautiful and appealing sights in all Palestine.[236] At our feet gracefully spreads out the city of Christ. With its dazzling white houses, its chalky soil, its verdant trees that adorn it within and encircle it with a girdle of green, it resembles, to use St. Jerome's comparison,[237] a beautiful white rose, delicately opening its corolla. That is why the Arabs sometimes called it *"Medina Abiat"* (White City).

But let us look farther away and take in the magnificent horizon that meets our gaze in every direction. On every side vast expanses of land, sky, or sea vie with one another in claiming attention; on all sides are valleys, mountains, cities, and villages, the sea and its immensity. To the east we see the mountains of Gilead and Moab dominating Lake Tiberias, which is unhappily not visible, and the Jordan valley; then, nearer, Mount Thabor, with its verdant and solitary dome. To the south, the immense plain of Jezreel, with its rolling surface and numerous villages (among which are the famous sites of Naim, Endor, Legio, and Jezreel), bounded from east to west by the Little Hermon, the mountains of Gelboe, the more dis-

[234] *Itinerarium*, 5.

[235] St. Antoninus plainly mentions this fact, as a privilege granted by the Blessed Virgin to her compatriots.

[236] The author of these lines spent three delightful hours in prayer and meditation on this celebrated site. Perhaps in no other place can one so exactly observe the principal theatre of Our Lord's preaching in Galilee.

[237] *Epist.* XLVI, *ad Marcell.*

tant mountains of Samaria and the long bluish Carmel range, which reaches to the very edge of the sea. On the west, we distinctly see the surface of the Mediterranean, bordered by a fringe of yellow sand. Lastly, to the north, in the foreground, the plain of Buttauf, with the cities of Sepphoris and Cana; farther on, the mountains of Upper Galilee, with Safed, the city that cannot be hid;[238] still more distant, shutting off the horizon, the summit of the Great Hermon, whose snows mingle with the blue of the sky.[239] What a sight! How often did not Christ, in His boyhood and young manhood, praying upon this sublime altar, turn His looks toward the sea and Europe, thinking of the thousands of hearts that were some day to adore Him and bless His name!

It was this modest agricultural town, located off the highways of travel, a town without a history, which no poet or historian of Israel even mentioned before our Savior's coming,[240] that God chose as a screen for the hidden life of Christ. Nazareth was marvelously suited to this providential purpose. In the first place, as we have seen, from an outward point of view and by its location it breathed an atmosphere of peace and quiet. A retreat: that is indeed its particular characteristic and special mark. Before the hour sounded for the Messias' manifestation, who would suspect that He was living in this humble nook? But Nazareth's fitness for the long period of the hidden life appears still more striking if we consider it from the political point of view. In this little corner of Galilee

[238] Matt. 5: 14.

[239] To follow this description, see Legendre, *Carte de la Palestine;* Fillion and Nicole, *Atlas Géographique de la Bible,* plates X and XI.

[240] In fact, it is nowhere spoken of in the Old Testament nor in the writings of Flavius Josephus. On this subject, see, besides the Bible dictionaries, Fillion, *Essais d'Exégèse,* pp. 205–237; Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine,* new ed., 1868, pp. 365–368; V. Guérin, *Description de la Palestine: La Galilée,* I, 83–102; Chauvet and Isambert, *Syrie, Palestine,* 1887, pp. 438–442; Th. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 320–323; *La Palestine,* by professors of Notre-Dame de France à Jérusalem, 2d ed., pp. 440–459.

the Holy Family escaped the terrible disturbance which, first under the tyrannical government of Archelaus and especially after his deposition by the Romans, so violently stirred up Judea, when Cyrinus, proconsul of Syria, carried out his second census,[241] with a view to tax the people in the name of Rome, since the province was now under its direct authority. The Jews were extremely exasperated, for they saw in this measure a mark of their final subjection to the conquering pagans, whom they detested. The High Priest of that time succeeded in holding the mass of the people in a certain outward calm; but a strictly theocratic party rose up under the leadership of Judas of Giscala. The procurator Coponius had not much trouble in crushing this beginning of revolt; however, the rebels remained associated under the name of Zealots; ready on every occasion to stand up for the sacred rights of their nation.[242] From that time on, the fire continued to smoulder under cover, until, in A. D. 60, there broke out the violent insurrection which resulted in the destruction of the Jewish State. Galilee, where the Holy Family was living when the first disturbance occurred in Judea, escaped Cyrinus' census, since it was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, and it enjoyed tranquillity during the whole period of our Savior's hidden life.

II. The Finding of Christ in the Temple

For the period before the Holy Family settled at Nazareth, the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke supply us with rather numerous details of the Savior's infancy. Now, on the contrary, until the beginning of the public life, they observe strict silence. With all the livelier gratitude do we receive from

[241] See Appendix XV.

[242] Cfr. Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, ii, 1; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, I, 485–487.

the hands of St. Luke two informative summaries, one regarding Christ's childhood properly so called, the other with reference to His young manhood, and, between these two summaries, a characteristic episode which permits us to cast a glance into the soul of the Divine Child.

Let us recall that, of all the Evangelists, St. Luke is the one who best reveals the human nature of the Incarnate Word. What he tells us of Christ's growth enters well into his plan. Before mentioning the mental and moral progress of Jesus, he points out the different phases of His physical development, —in His mother's womb,[243] as an infant, [244] and as a young boy.[245]

The first summary referred to is significant: "The Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in him." [246] Here we have three distinct facts. First, Christ "grew": His body developed regularly, like a tender plant stretching upward little by little.[247] Secondly, He "waxed strong": a healthy vigor coursed through His members as sap spreads into the branches of a sturdy plant. Third, He was "full of wisdom." This refers to the mind. In proportion that Christ grew physically, He also progressed in wisdom, conformable to the rule that will be indicated later.[248] The word "wisdom" should be taken in its Hebraic acceptation, as synonymous with intelligence. Lastly, "the grace of God was in" this blessed Child.[249] This feature refers to the Christ

[243] Luke 1:42: βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ; Vulg., *"fructus ventris."*

[244] Luke 2:17, 27, 40: τὸ παιδίον; cfr. Matt. 2:13 f., 20 f. The Vulgate does not show this distinction.

[245] Luke 2:43: ὁ παῖς; Vulg., *"puer."*

[246] Luke 2:40; cfr. 1:80, where it is said of the precursor, while still a child, that he "grew and was strengthened in spirit."

[247] Is. 53:2: "He shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground."

[248] In Greek, the use of the present participle, πληρούμενον, "being filled" with wisdom, indicates a repeated, continual fact.

[249] The Greek says ἐπ' αὐτό, in the accusative of motion, in place of *in illo* ("in him"), of the Vulgate.

Child's soul, in which the grace and complacence of Heaven dwelt ceaselessly, protecting and guiding it.

This simple reflection by the Evangelist is remarkably profound, and we are unable to grasp its full meaning. But it is the sum-total of what the Holy Ghost has been pleased to unveil of the period of Christ's childhood passed at Nazareth, from His return from Egypt until He reached the age of twelve. In appearance, it is very little indeed. However, what a wealth of ideas is hidden in those few words, and what an exquisite picture it gives us of the Savior's early childhood! He was a perfect, ideal child. All the fine qualities suited to His years shone forth most pleasingly in His words and conduct. In passing, let us admire the voluntary humiliation of the Son of God, who, in becoming man, deigned to submit to all the outward conditions of human development, even in the matter of knowledge and grace.

Outwardly Christ grew and developed, therefore, according to the usual conditions of life. His bodily growth took place without hindrance, without sickness or disease. We like to picture Him, in His early years, as a most charming child, as the ablest painters have so often represented Him.[250] Whatever His features may have been, His nobility of soul must have manifested itself in His countenance.

The mental and moral development proceeded apace with that of the body and mind, but with no startling, extraordinary or miraculous incidents. From year to year Christ revealed the qualities of mind and heart that became His age and station, but without passing beyond the laws of human development. St. Luke says nothing further about His growth, although it was the growth of God made man. But let us not forget that, although the Incarnate Word condescended to the

[250] More than once, on revisiting the Louvre art galleries and seeing the famous paintings there, we have observed the facial likeness which most of the great masters have quite naturally established between the Divine Child and His mother.

point of putting on the weakness and imperfections of childhood, we must not attribute to Him its defects. St. Paul writes: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." [251] It would not be correct to apply these words in their entirety to Jesus, whose thoughts, inclinations, and language were childlike only outwardly.

In His early years, therefore, Christ was not the infant prodigy described by the apocryphal gospels.[252] That would have been contrary to the providential plan, a plan according to which He was to remain lowly and hidden until His solemn appearance on the stage of history. Furthermore, such conduct on His part would have been in evident contradiction with the Gospel history, which, on the one hand,[253] asserts that He performed his first miracle at Cana at the outset of His public life, and, on the other hand,[254] shows us His fellow-countrymen of Nazareth extremely surprised when they saw Him step forth all of a sudden from His obscurity, speaking as a prophet and performing deeds of might.

A single remarkable deed occurred in that long period of Christ's retreat at Nazareth,[255] which gloriously showed to the outer world the progress that was daily taking place in

[251] 1 Cor. 13:11.

[252] Several times we have had occasion to point out their theatrical display of useless miracles and shocking fables, which give such a false idea of the Child Jesus. It is true that they do not once attempt to raise the veil that envelops the eighteen years which passed between the Temple episode (Luke 2:41–50) and the beginning of Christ's public life. The Arab Gospel of the Infancy explicitly says (chap. 54) that, beginning with His twelfth year, Jesus began to hide His miracles, secrets, and mysteries, until He reached His thirtieth year. In contrast with this reserve, however, they are much occupied with the period previous to that incident, to point out in one way or another the growth of the Child Jesus. They follow Him almost year by year, from the fourth to the eighth and the twelfth, showing in Him, not the blessed Child of Nazareth, who grew gently in wisdom and grace, but also a mature man, who has in Him no trait of childhood but its malice and defects.

[253] John 2:11.

[254] Mark 1:27; 2:12; 6:2–6.

[255] Luke 2:41–51.

the mind and soul of the Divine Child. This charming scene dispels for a moment, "after the fashion of a vivid ray of light, the darkness that enshrouded the youth" of Christ.[256]

We have already made mention of the three annual pilgrimages which the Jews were in duty bound to make to Jerusalem and to the Temple on the occasion of the great feasts of the Pasch, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.[257] The whole life of the theocratic nation then centered about the sanctuary which was regarded as the palace of Yahweh. In course of time, the precept became less strict, not only for those Jews who lived in foreign lands, but also for those who resided in the more distant districts of Palestine. These often were satisfied with a single annual pilgrimage; the celebration of the Pasch, recalling graces and glories of a higher order, had a special attraction for the greatest number of them. Thousands upon thousands of the faithful then came from all sides to Jerusalem. The precept directly affected only the men. Nevertheless, the women also, in a spirit of devotion, gladly performed some one of these pilgrimages, as did Anna, Samuel's mother,[258] and Mary in the present instance, and the holy women of Galilee mentioned in various passages of the Gospels.[259]

As St. Luke relates, Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem, every year, at the solemn feast of the Pasch, and when Christ was twelve years old, they, going up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast,[260] took Him along. Does this imply that the Divine Child had never before taken part in the pilgrimages of Mary and Joseph, and that He now accom-

[256] Weiss, *Leben Jesu*, I, 266. On the interpretation given this by the critics, see Appendix XXI.

[257] Cfr. Ex. 23:14–17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16.

[258] 1 Kings 1:7.

[259] Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:55.

[260] Luke 2:41 f.

panied them for the first time? The commentators are not in agreement on this point; but it seems to us difficult to admit that Christ's parents consented to separate themselves from Him and leave Him at Nazareth when they undertook these holy journeys. The Talmud [261] expressly speaks of three-year-old children being carried to the Temple on their fathers' shoulders, and of five-year-old children being held by the hand to help them walk up the steps of the sanctuary. Christ's age is mentioned here, not merely to fix the exact date of the event, but especially because of the importance which the Jews assigned to that age. In fact, it was at the end of the twelfth year and the beginning of the thirteenth, that every Jewish boy became, according to regulations marked out by the rabbis and according to the established expression, *bar-mitsevah, i. e.,* "a son of the precept," or *benhatthorah,* "a son of the law," that is, subject to all the prescriptions of the Mosaic Code, even the most burdensome, such as fasting and pilgrimages to the Temple.[262] This is easy to understand because an Oriental at twelve years of age is no longer a child, but a young man who does not dread fatigue.

The Evangelist passes over the details of the journey and of the feast; but we can briefly supplement his account. The Paschal solemnities were celebrated in the middle of Nisan, which was the first month of the Jewish religious year.[263] As from Nazareth to Jerusalem was considered at least a three days' journey, it was necessary to start about the tenth of Nisan. Pilgrims rarely set out alone. The inhabitants of any locality or of a whole group of villages would join together, and form a caravan, which advanced piously and cheerfully,

[261] Chagiga, I, 1.

[262] See Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in Evangelia,* p. 739; A. Wünsche, *Neue Beiträge zur Erläuterung der Evangelien aus Talmud und Midrasch,* pp. 418 f.

[263] It began at the new moon of our month of March and ended at the April new moon.

praying and singing psalms.[264] Above[265] we quoted in full Psalm 121, *"Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi . . . ,"* which so fittingly expresses the feelings of a Jewish pilgrim on the way to the Holy City, the varied wonders of which it so proudly describes. In its lines we read the hearts of those myriads of Jews who, at that time, crowded all the roads. To render these roads more passable, care was taken to put them in condition and to repair the bridges a month before the feast. In the environs of Jerusalem, the tombstones were whitewashed or else they were fenced off to make them more conspicuous and prevent pilgrims from accidentally touching them and thus becoming legally defiled.

In the Holy City lodgings were prepared and a supply of provisions was got ready so as worthily to receive the brethren coming from various parts of Palestine and of the Roman Empire. But where could they house so many visitors, whose number at times exceeded several million for the Feast of the Pasch?[266] First of all in the houses of the city, which opened their doors in the most hospitable manner; then in the houses of the nearest villages. In addition,—since these would not suffice,—tents were set up on the flat roofs or in the open fields, so that everyone could find temporary shelter.[267]

The feast began on the evening of the 14th Nisan, with the

[264] Especially the Psalms called "Psalms of the steps" or rather "of the ascents." They were Psalms 119–133 (Heb., 120–134), which, because of their lively swing and thoroughly national character, lent themselves readily to this use.

[265] Page 216.

[266] Cfr. Josephus, *Bell, Iud.,* II, xiv, 3 and V, ix, 3. In the former of these passages the Jewish historian explicitly mentions 3,000,000 pilgrims. In the latter passage he says that the number of sheep immolated for the solemn repast of the 14th Nisan was 256,500; as ordinarily ten pilgrims were reckoned for each Paschal lamb, this gives us 2,565,000. Cfr. Philo, *De Monarchia,* II, 1.

[267] On the Paschal ceremonies in our Lord's time, see the Talmud tractate Pesachim, and Edersheim, *The Temple, its Ministry and its Services,* pp. 177–225. On the way the Jews celebrate it to-day, see Coypel, *Le Judaisme, Esquisse de Mœurs Juives,* pp. 231–245.

solemn repast at which the paschal lamb was eaten.[268] The 15th was the great day of the Pasch; it was celebrated as a Sabbath of higher rank,[269] and sacrifices of a special kind were offered to God. On the 16th was the ceremony of *Omer*,[270] which attracted a large number of spectators. It consisted in consecrating the firstfruits of the harvest to the Lord.[271] After sunset, on the evening of the 15th, three men, each carrying a sickle and a basket, went to a previously designated field, usually in the Cedron valley, and cut the equivalent of a sheaf of barley, which they then carried to the Temple. The next morning the grain was thrashed, the kernels were slightly roasted and ground with the greatest care. With part of the flour thus obtained, mixed with oil, a sort of paste was made, which was burned on the altar of holocausts.

The five days between the 17th and 21st of Nisan bore the name of half-feast. The 22d, the last day of the octave, was a day of rest, like the 15th, but without the same solemnity. Pilgrims were not obliged to remain in Jerusalem for the whole octave, but were free to leave on the morning of the 17th, and a great number of them took advantage of this authorization. If we take literally St. Luke's chronological note relative to Joseph and Mary: "Having fulfilled the days [of the feast], when they returned," [272] it would seem that the Holy Family did not intend to depart until after the 22d of Nisan; and this is in harmony with their habits of great piety. Hence it was on the morning of the 23d, when the caravan which they had joined set itself in motion for the return journey to Galilee, that Christ concealed Himself and remained in Jerusalem without notifying His mother and

[268] We shall describe this feast and its ceremonies when recounting the events of the evening of Holy Thursday and the institution of the Eucharist.

[269] Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7, etc.

[270] A Hebrew word meaning "sheaf."

[271] Lev. 23:10–14.

[272] Luke 2:43.

foster-father. This was a deliberate, premeditated act on His part. Mary and Joseph did not notice His absence at first, or at least they did not think of any trouble. Certainly their solicitude, ever so loving and tender, of which the Gospel accounts of the holy Infancy give striking proofs, was not for a moment in fault. But Jesus had grown up always loving and docile. Such a child, whose personal conduct never gave His parents the least uneasiness, did not need to be constantly watched; on the contrary, He deserved absolute trust. Besides, one must witness the setting out of an Oriental caravan to form an idea of the confusion which reigns at the time. Various groups form and break up. It is all a pell-mell of men, women, children, and beasts of burden; there are deafening shouts of people calling out and looking for one another; there is a noisy, bustling going to and fro. The departure is finally accomplished. Many women and old men ride out on asses; the other men and the young people go on foot. A hundred incidents delay or accelerate the pace of the caravan. Children, who at first were at their father's or mother's side, presently join some group of friends or neighbors.[273]

It was only in the afternoon, when the travelers halted for the night, and the members of each family gathered together for their common encampment, that Mary and Joseph were able to note the disappearance of the Boy Jesus.[274] After re-

[273] What takes place every year at Jerusalem when the Greek Orthodox and the Russian pilgrims who have come for the Christmas festivals, go in thousands to the Jordan to take their traditional bath, enables us to understand how things must have happened at the departure of a large caravan such as that which the pilgrims from Nazareth had joined.

[274] We would like to know at what exact spot this first halt was made. But this is impossible because we do not know whether the Galilean pilgrims on their return journey took the direct route across Samaria or whether they turned off, going through Peraea, so as to avoid unpleasant contact with the Samaritans. The distance which the Evangelist designates by the expression ἡμέρας ὁδόν (Vulg., *iter diei*), "one day's journey," in the Orient ordinarily is a distance covered in six or seven hours.

peated inquiries [275] from one group to another, among their relatives and acquaintances, they decided to return to Jerusalem. But they could undertake that sorrowful journey only the next morning; otherwise they would have run the risk of passing Him whom they were looking for. Along the road they continued their anxious search, scrutinizing and questioning those whom they passed. After reaching the city, they continued their inquiries. Painful hours these were, during which the sword predicted by Simeon pierced Mary's heart.

At last, on the third day from that on which they had set out on the return journey to Jerusalem,[276] they found Jesus in the Temple, *i. e.,* in one of the numerous structures that surrounded the sanctuary and served for the most varied uses; for example, the academic lectures of the rabbis. There, to quote St. Luke's words, they found Jesus "sitting in the midst of the doctors": not, however, according to the false interpretation too often favored by painters, seated on a somewhat elevated chair, in the manner of a teacher, but, after the manner of pupils or disciples, on the ground, in Oriental fashion,[277] in the space left free by the venerable rabbis, who were ranged in a semi-circle.[278] In this attitude Jesus listened attentively to the weighty discourses which the doctors held with one another and with others present; then He Himself put some questions to them, in a tone of pleasing modesty.[279]

[275] The use of the compound verb ἀνεζήτουν and of the imperfect indicates repeated searching, evidently accompanied by keen anguish.

[276] The phrase μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς (Vulg., *post triduum*), corresponds to our "the third day." According to the most natural and probable calculation, the first day was that of the return to the Holy City; the second was devoted to looking and inquiring in all directions. The Child Jesus was found in the course of the third day.

[277] Acts 22:3; see Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae in Evangelia,* on Luke 2:46; T. Robinson, *The Evangelists and the Mishna,* p. 206.

[278] Attempts have been made to draw up a list of the most famous Jewish doctors who may have witnessed the scene so vividly described by St. Luke. But the result is nothing more than a vague guess.

[279] And not certainly, with the boldness and arrogance which the aprocryphal

This was quite in conformity with the customs of the time. The Talmud shows us the rabbis carrying on discussions with their disciples, asking them questions, urging them to state objections and to ask questions themselves, to which the rabbis replied. We may easily imagine the manner in which Jesus took part in the discussion. When questioned by one of the doctors, He answered to their complete satisfaction. A lively dialogue would soon be in progress between them; other doctors took part in the discussion, and Jesus shone more and more in this intellectual tournament which doubtless concerned the explanation of difficult passages of Holy Writ. After answering them, He in turn asked them questions and astonished those present no less by the fitness and wisdom of His questions than by the adroitness of His answers. Our piety would at least like to know the general theme of that argument in which Jesus took so creditable a part; but the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to gratify our curiosity on this point and we will not commit the indiscretion of proposing hypotheses that would lead to nothing.[280] Whatever it may have been, all who witnessed the scene were astonished [281] at His knowledge and at the words which so brilliantly manifested that knowledge.

When His parents saw Him in the midst of this grave assembly, they, too, were greatly astonished,[282] for they were

Gospel of Thomas (chap. xix) and the Arab Gospel of the Infancy (chaps. L–LII) attribute to Him, nor with the childish and unpleasing vanity of the historian Josephus, who relates (*Vita, 2*) that at the age of fourteen he was an object of general admiration because of the extent and vivacity of his knowledge, and the high priests and doctors of the law came to question him as to the meaning of Scripture texts.

[280] Here again the apocryphal writers make assertions without the slightest scruple. The Gospel of Thomas (*loc. cit.*) says that the Boy Jesus began explaining to the rabbis the number of the spheres and of the heavenly bodies, their nature and movements, and that He explained to them physics, metaphysics, hyperphysics, and hypophysics, and hundreds of other things besides!

[281] Ἐξίσταντο, says the Greek text: "They were beside themselves."

[282] Ἐξεπλάγησαν; another forceful expression.

familiar with His habits of reserve and silence and the care with which He had till then hid His higher nature. Never before had He put Himself thus in evidence, so that they were quite unprepared for the sight which suddenly met their eyes. A gentle complaint escapes from Mary's heart; but it can hardly be qualified as a reproach, for the mother of Christ is satisfied to let the facts speak for themselves: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

To this double question, Christ replies by two other questions: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" By these few words He respectfully indicates to His mother the mysterious, yet legitimate reason for His conduct during the three days that had just elapsed: "Did you not know?" Did you not know, better than anyone else in the world, what My nature is, what is the rôle allotted to Me as the Messias and Son of God? He in turn is surprised. He is astonished to see that, on the point which He has most at heart, those very ones who are united to Him by the closest ties, His mother and His foster-father, seem not to think as He does. The duty which He esteems above all, which He regards as superior to all others, in what concerns His personal conduct, He sums up in this majestic statement: *"In his quæ Patris mei sunt oportet me esse."* [283] Evidently it is the words "My Father" that contain the principal idea; hence it is important to determine their exact meaning. Now, according to the constant interpretation of Catholic

[283] The Greek words ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός μου, which the Vulgate translates literally by *in his quae Patris mei sunt,* might grammatically and logically have two distinct meanings: "The things, the affairs of my Father," or else: "The house of my Father." The second interpretation, which is that of the Syriac version and of most early commentators, seems to restrict the thought unduly, the more so as Christ was about to leave the Temple at once. The former of the two translations, which was adopted by Western Fathers and interpreters, is the more natural and at the same time gives a deeper sense. Both meanings are justified by examples taken from sacred and profane writers. (See the large commentaries).

exegetes and theologians, it is in the strict, literal sense, in a unique sense, that Christ here attributes to God the title of Father. The fact is undeniable,[284] and it is impossible to understand why one should not give to this title, in this passage, the value it so frequently has in subsequent parts of the Gospel narrative. With these words, the first of His that we know, Christ proclaims Himself Son of God, as He often did later on.[285] Mary had just mentioned Christ's adoptive father: "Thy father and I have sought thee." The Divine Child repeats this title, but in an infinitely loftier sense, the only sense that corresponds to the reality of the facts, as St. Matthew and St. Luke have taught all through their account. By these sublime words Jesus, therefore, clearly indicates the motive that prompted His stay in Jerusalem: His Father's business kept Him there. Mary and Joseph had quite legitimate rights over Him; but those of God were sovereign and marked out His supreme duty, which at times required of Him a certain independence towards even those who were dearest to Him after His heavenly Father.

When Mary and Joseph heard these words, they were filled with astonishment. The sacred writer adds that "they understood not." And yet, let us repeat, they were thoroughly familiar with all that concerned Christ's divine origin and nature, as well as His Messianic vocation. But the divine plan of redemption had been revealed to them only in vague outline. The concrete details of that plan, as they were successively unfolded during His life, remained mysteries for them. The full light gleamed in their minds only little by little. This explains why they did not at once grasp the *full* extent, the *full* depth of the words that Christ addressed to them when they found Him in the midst of the doctors. Herein we have a new

[284] We shall later reply to the critics' unfounded denial of this view.

[285] St. John cites many other sayings of our Lord which have a great affinity with this one. (Cfr. John 8:29; 9:4; 14:31).

proof that there was nothing marvelous or miraculously extraordinary in His development. Never before had He uttered anything so characteristic. With what respect we receive these words from His lips, and what a joy it is to find them so worthy of Him of whom it was later said: "Never did man speak like this man!" [286] In uttering them, He gave voice to what was deepest in His soul. Therein, as has often been recognized, we find the entire programme of His future ministry, of His rôle as Messias. They possess a character that is plainly prophetic. Without this charming picture we would hardly have been able to understand the Savior's religious development and by what mental and moral charm He made Himself the happiness and edification of those about Him.

St. Luke closes his account with two remarkable statements. The first of them is: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." [287] These words sum up, in most expressive terms, the life of the Incarnate Word during the eighteen years that He was still to pass at Nazareth. It would seem that the Evangelist, by setting this down, meant to indicate that not the least semblance of insubordination entered into the exceptional affair just related. His second remark shows us Mary's holy soul, telling us that she "kept all these words in her heart," which is to say, that she made them the subject of constant meditation, in which her thought and tenderness found nourishment of incomparable sweetness.

[286] John 7:46.

[287] Luke 2:51. The words ἦν ὑποτασσόμενος (Vulg., *erat subditus*) forcefully expresses an absolute obedience, a constant and unreserved submission.

CHAPTER II

The Intellectual and Moral Development of Christ

IMMEDIATELY following the incident in the Temple, St. Luke inserts the second *résumé* relative to the Savior's growth of which we spoke above: "Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age,[288] and grace with God and men." [289] The first *résumé* referred to the development of Mary's Son before He attained His twelfth year; this one describes His growth, from every point of view, between His twelfth and thirtieth year. In three distinct expressions it points out His intellectual formation, His physical growth, and the wonderful progress that took place in His soul. And this general development is said to have occurred, not only "with men," who were the daily witnesses of it, but also and especially "with God," who knows the depths of the heart and is the absolute judge of the reality of our moral ascent.

But in what manner and under what special conditions did that evolution take place? We would like to lift the veil that hides this profound mystery and to disclose the inner processes by which the character of Christ was formed, how His mind was instructed and His heart cultivated, how He reached the superior excellence of His mature years and the sublime principles of His Gospel. But in the matter of this

[288] The Greek word ἡλικίᾳ is ambiguous, as it may indicate stature or age. In Luke 19:3, it refers to stature; in John 9:21, 23 and Heb. 11:11, to age; in Matt. 6:27 and Luke 12:25, the sense is doubtful. The Latin Fathers, in this passage, adopt the second meaning, following the Italic Version and the Vulgate. But it is probable that the Evangelist was alluding rather to stature, because the fact of advancing in age is not necessarily an indication of progress.

[289] Luke 2:52.

phenomenon of Our Lord's human development, it is the same as with everything concerning His infancy, boyhood, and young manhood: it is enveloped in a mist which the greatest Christian thinkers have never succeeded in completely dispelling. Although St. Luke twice mentions it, and although he opens up for us marvelous vistas into the Savior's soul and its theandric operations, he does not determine its mode. Even St. Paul, who in his Epistles outlines such an extremely rich Christology, is completely silent on the problem of Christ's development.[290] Alas that it is not permitted us to question the angels on this point, or better still, Mary and Joseph, especially Mary after the Resurrection of her Divine Son! Indeed our limited minds find a thousand difficulties in trying to conceive the intellectual and moral growth of a God-Man. "We are slow to understand that this soul passed through the same phases as ours, in the development of its understanding and feelings; that knowledge came to it, as it comes to us, through the intermediary of books and human teaching, or through the influence of surrounding circumstances, growing more and more in the measure that the years advance. . . . It is with difficulty that we interpret the words telling us that this intellectual [and moral] growth was as abundant as the development of the body, that Christ grew in wisdom as in physical height. From the very first, even in His infancy, we picture Him to ourselves as teaching, not as learning. . . . Despite the clearest expressions of the Gospel accounts, it is hard for us to imagine Him as acquiring any information whatever from those about Him." [291]

[290] The text, Col. 2:3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," teaches us at least: (1) that our Lord, as the Divine Word and Son of the Father, possesses infinite wisdom and knowledge; (2) that as man, by virtue of the hypostatic union, He possesses the relative fullness of wisdom and knowledge which is compatible with human nature.

[291] E. H. Plumptre, *Christ and Christendom,* p. 85. In Appendix XXII, we cite an important declaration of the Holy Office forbidding Catholic theologians to limit the knowledge of the God-Man.

The difficulty for us is that in Jesus there was not only a human nature, but also the divine nature in all its fullness, and this is precisely what creates the problem and makes it so delicate. The Catholic theologian, while trying to solve it so far as the weakness of the human intellect permits, must not for a moment forget that Our Lord, at every period of His life, was true God as well as true man, and true man as well as true God. Not for a single instant was His divine nature in any way obscured or effaced by His humanity; not for a single instant was His human nature absorbed and, as it were, annihilated by His divinity. It is an astounding "mystery of godliness," [292] on which we timidly turn our loving and wondering gaze. In the course of the explanations about to follow, we will never lose sight of the grave danger there would be in dissociating these two natures.[293]

It is proper, at the outset, to inquire how the question of Christ's growth, both intellectual and moral, has been solved, in the course of the ages, within the Catholic Church. Naturally the Fathers were the first to treat it.[294] Yet, we must not expect to find in them, from the very start, a completely formulated doctrine on so difficult a point, on the subject of which no controversy had yet arisen. They do not always weigh their expressions, as had to be done later on; at times they hesitate and grope their way. They did not yet feel the need of distinguishing between Christ's divine knowledge and His human knowledge: a distinction quite essential for the solution of our problem. Hence the Apostolic Fathers generally are vague and uncertain. St. Justin says: "Jesus grew after the manner of other men." [295] St. Irenaeus: "He came to save all men.

[292] 1 Tim. 3:16.

[293] It is by failing to take any account of Christ's divine nature that the Rationalists have fallen into such great errors on the subject of His interior development. (See Appendix XXIII).

[294] On this point see Petavius, *De Incarnatione Verbi,* XI, 2.

[295] *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 88.

. . . This is why He passed through all ages, becoming a child with children, to sanctify children, . . . making Himself an example of piety, justice, and submission for them; becoming a young man among youth, so as to be their model also." [296] Origen is somewhat more precise: Christ "had not yet been born forty days and had not yet come to Nazareth, but He already possessed all wisdom." [297] However, His *exinanitio,* mentioned by St. Paul, prevented the Word from manifesting to the world the fullness of His wisdom.[298] Yet He had to learn to speak a human language, because, before becoming incarnate, He had never uttered a word like to ours.[299] Herein we already see, clearly formulated, the distinction between Christ's divine knowledge and His acquired human knowledge.

Later on, the Fathers' statements become more precise. Arianism had broken out in all its violence and, to cope with it, there was need of proving that Christ had been true man as well as true God. His intellectual and moral progress, referred to by St. Luke, is again and again mentioned by some of the Fathers in proof of the perfection of His humanity. It is in this sense that St. Ambrose in particular expresses himself thus: "The humanity alone grew in wisdom, rose little by little above human nature made divine, becoming and appearing to all as the instrument of the wisdom which the divinity employed to act and shine." [300] According to St. Cyril of Alexandria,[301] St. Ambrose,[302] and St. Fulgentius,[303] the progress which St. Luke mentions should not be understood of Christ's divine wisdom, but of His human wisdom. St.

[296] *Haer.,* II, xxii, 4.
[297] *Hom. in Luc.,* XVIII.
[298] *Hom in Ierem.,* I, 7.
[299] *Hom. in Ierem.,* I, 8.
[300] *Orat. contra Arian.,* VII, x, 53.
[301] *Quod Unus sit Christus.*
[302] *De Incarnat.,* VII, 72 f.
[303] *Ad Trasimundum,* I, 8.

Cyril [304] adds that Christ manifested His different prerogatives according to His age, so as to conform to the ordinary laws of humanity. Similar assertions may be found in the writings of St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Augustine, St. John Damascene, etc. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that "though Jesus grew, we must not suppose that His humanity was not perfect from the start, or that it was capable of growth, but that it manifested itself progressively." [305] St. Athanasius writes [306] that Christ's progress in wisdom is a more and more complete manifestation of His divinity. St. Augustine says: "The ignorance [of mankind at the crib] did not exist in any way in that Infant, in whom the Word was made flesh to dwell among us, and I will not admit that the Infant Christ passed through that infirmity of mind which we see in other infants." [307]

Passing from the period of the Fathers to that of the Scholastic theologians, we see the question regarding Christ's intellectual and moral progress being constantly more illumined and established on foundations that have remained final.[308] Following Peter Lombard and St. Thomas Aquinas, the great theologians enunciated this indisputable principle: By virtue of the hypostatic union, our Lord's humanity must have been adorned with all the perfections compatible with human nature. With that proposition as a starting-point, they distinguished in Christ two distinct "knowledges," corresponding to His two natures: the divine or uncreated knowledge, which does not differ from that which the Holy Trinity possesses, and human or created knowledge. The latter is, in turn,

[304] *Contr. Nestor.*, III, 4.

[305] *Thesaur.*, assert. IX, 7.

[306] *Orat. contra Arian.*, VII, 51.

[307] *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione.*

[308] The development of this question from the strictly theological point of view offers the keenest interest. But it does not enter into the scope of our present study, which is chiefly historical and exegetical. Below (p. 395, n. 314) we give a list of the principal theologians to be consulted on this subject.

subdivided into three branches, conformable to its three special sources. There is the knowledge of the vision of God, infused knowledge, and acquired knowledge, also called experimental. By knowledge of vision, or beatific knowledge, is meant that knowledge which the soul of Christ obtained, after the manner of the angels and the blessed in Heaven, in the intuitive contemplation of the Divine Essence; by infused knowledge, the illuminations which God constantly transmitted to it directly;[309] by acquired knowledge, the ideas that came to it from the exercise of the senses, from experience, from reasoning, etc. The two former kinds of knowledge were supernatural; the third was simply natural. But according to the common opinion, the beatific knowledge and the infused knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ were perfect from the first moment of His conception; they were, consequently, incapable of receiving any increase. Yet each day they emitted more and more luminous rays, *"Quemadmodum sol ab ortu in meridiem progrediens claritate quoque dicitur proficere; non quod illa in se crescat, sed in effectu tantum, quia maiorem lucem apud nos paulatim diffundit."*[310] His experimental knowledge, on the contrary, constantly grew at each new contact of the Incarnate Word with the created universe. Not, however, that it teaches Christ absolutely new things; but it shows Him under a new aspect ideas or facts that He already knew by virtue of His infused knowledge. It was thus that, in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *"cum esset Filius Dei, didicit ex iis quæ passus est, obedientiam."* Christ already knew obedience in a theoretical manner; by the intermediary of the sufferings He endured to obey His Father, He knew that virtue in a concrete and practical fashion. His experimental knowl-

[309] On the difference that exists between the *scientia beata* and the *scientia infusa*, see Franzelin, *Tractatus de Verbo Incarnato*, p. 420.

[310] This expressive comparison is that of Cornelius Jansenius, *Comment. in Luc.*, 2:52.

edge He acquired by degrees. Hence it made real progress in Him, since, in seeing, hearing, or experiencing new things in any manner, He passed through new sensations and new ideas, from which He drew new conclusions. In this sense He truly grew in wisdom. As has been said, "*In se* it was possible for Jesus to acquire a perfect human knowledge without any outward experience, through the intermediary of His divine nature, but, as it entered into God's plan that the Savior should be a perfect man, it was necessary that to the physical development which took place in complete harmony with human nature, there should correspond an intellectual progress." [311]

These distinctions seem to us to elucidate as much as possible the delicate point we are treating. Moreover, they establish a harmony between the Fathers, for they explain how some were able to admit a real progress in the Savior's wisdom, while others were willing to accept only an apparent intellectual growth.[312]

As to the moral development of Christ, we find the same difficulty solved in a similar manner. We distinguish again, following the theologians, between supernatural habits and acts, principles and effects. The works of grace or acts of virtue constantly grow and multiply; but the infused habits, the virtuous dispositions, sanctifying grace, everything that His quality of God-Man required in His soul, could not increase. The Savior always possessed these gifts in the highest degree. Such is, in fact, the doctrine of St. Thomas: "*In Christo non poterat esse gratiæ augmentum, sicut nec in beatis . . . nisi secundum effectus, in quantum scilicet aliquis . . . virtuosiora opera facit.*" [313] In what concerned the Savior's divine nature, it is evident that a growth in grace, that is,

[311] Schanz, *Kommentar über das Evangelium des heil. Lukas,* p. 184.

[312] This latter view was also that of Bossuet, *Élévations sur les Mystères,* 20th day (Versailles ed., VIII, 467 f.).

[313] *Summa Theol.,* 3a, qu. 7, art. 12; see also Franzelin, *De Verbo Incarnato,* p. 409.

an increase of His Father's favor (χάρις), was impossible. But the same was not true regarding His human nature. Assuredly, this progress in grace,—as we observed above,—does not suppose that previously there existed the least imperfection in Christ. His moral progress took place, in the eyes of men, only by comparison with what had been observed in His former state, which was already perfect in its kind, but corresponding with a less advanced age.[314]

Let us sum up. St. Luke's words must be understood as meaning a real development, in the sense we have just indicated: Christ truly grew in a threefold aspect—physical, intellectual, and moral. If we are to believe in the reality of the Incarnation of the Word, consequently in His humanity, we must not shrink from the idea of His progressive formation. Neither St. Luke nor Catholic theologians have done so; but these latter have made more precise and have interpreted in a scientific manner the Evangelist's expression, the while determining the restrictions required by the Savior's divine nature. We are glad to quote this remark of Father Didon: "The complete and personal union of the human nature and the divine nature . . . gave Jesus intuition of eternal truth, the possession of infinite love, the unbroken enjoyment of infinite beauty;[315] but it did not prevent in His reason the development of experimental knowledge,[316] the progressive practice of virtues, the effort of the will, the fatigues of the body, labor, and pain."[317]

[314] Theologians that may be consulted: St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 3a, qu. 9–12; Suarez, *Comment. ac Disputatio in Tertiam Partem D. Thomae*, ed. Vives, 1860, XVIII, pp. 1–90; De Lugo, *De Mysterio Incarnat.*, chaps. 19–21; Lieber, *Ueber das Wachsthum Christi*, 1860; Franzelin, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 1874, theses 41–43; Jungmann, *Tractatus de Verbo Incarnato*, 2d ed., no. 241–250; J. Pra, *"L'Hypothèse du Développement Progressif dans le Christ,"* in the *Études Religieuses*, 30th year, 6th series (1878), II, 205–207; Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae Specialis*, 3d ed., I, 486–493; Pohle-Preuss, *Christology*, pp. 247 sqq.

[315] St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 3a, qu. 15, art. 10.

[316] *Ibid.*, qu. 12.

[317] Didon, *Vie de Jésus-Christ*, I, 79.

This development constitutes a very difficult and complex problem. Dr. Keil, an orthodox Protestant theologian, was not wrong in affirming that "up to the present time no human mind has been able to solve it in a completely satisfactory manner." [318] However, it seems to us that, in the light of the Gospel, as interpreted by the Fathers and by Catholic exegetes and theologians, we can at least partly surmise what that progress was.

Let us now enter into a few details. In the case of ordinary men, even the greatest geniuses, we find that various external circumstances sometimes exercise a considerable influence upon their education and formation. In fact, it cannot be denied that all of us are, in a certain measure, the fruit of the environment in which our childhood and youth have been passed. May we say, and if so to what extent, that the Savior's intellectual and moral growth took place under influences like to those which have activated ours? Let us endeavor, with the respect due to the unique nature of the God-Man, to answer this delicate question. But, at the outset, we must clearly recognize that so perfect a soul really can have had no teacher in the ordinary acceptation of the term.

The first influence that comes to mind is that of the country, then, in a narrower circle, that of the city or town where one has grown up: consequently, for Christ, the influence of Palestine in general, more particularly of Galilee, a province with a spirit of intense nationalism, with simple customs, and solid piety; still more especially the influence of the little town of Nazareth, whose fitness as a shelter for His hidden life we have already admired. When we take up the special study of the Divine Master's character, we shall have occasion to note how greatly He loved His people and His country. But may

[318] *Kommentar über die Evangelien des Markus and des Lukas,* p. 244. "No psychology," says Didon (*op. cit.,* I, p. 78), "can grasp the irradiations of God in the soul of Christ."

we suppose that Palestine, Galilee, Nazareth played an important part in His formation? If, as we said a short while ago, nature, so smiling in the environs of Nazareth, was able to contribute in some slight degree to the formation of His mind and supplied Him with numerous subjects of comparison, which He later employed in His discourses, it is certain that His countrymen, who *en masse* remained incredulous in His regard and who one day treated Him with utmost rudeness,[319] were hardly capable of becoming His educators.

Next after this first influence, of a more general order, there is that of home, of the house and those living in it. The home in which Christ passed the greatest part of His life was a very modest one. There He learned the practice of humility, of gentle reserve, of poverty, virtues that shone so brightly throughout His public life. Outwardly nothing distinguished Him from others of His own age and social condition. "He lived as the other children lived . . . and as in great measure they live now. He who has seen the children of Nazareth in their red caftans and bright tunics of silk or cloth, girded with a many-colored sash, and sometimes covered with a loose outer jacket of white or blue—he who has watched their noisy and merry games and heard their ringing laughter as they wander about the hills of their little native vale . . . may perhaps form some conception of how Jesus looked and played when He was a child." [320]

But home is above all the parents. What beautiful and edifying things have been said and how much more one might still say [321] without ever tiring, about Christ's parents, considered as agents in His formation! Protestant writers, too, however much or little they may possess the faith, cannot restrain their feelings when they gaze upon this august trinity

[319] Luke 4: 28–30.

[320] Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, 23d ed., I, 61.

[321] See *infra*, p. 398, 410 sqq., on the character of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

of earth. One of them says: "With Joseph to guide and support, with Mary to hallow and sweeten it, with the youthful Jesus to illuminate it with the very light of Heaven, we may well believe that it was a home of trustful piety, of angelic purity, of almost perfect peace." [322]

We have already mentioned, and the Bible is authentic guaranty, that the Jews always attached the highest importance to the education of their children, whom they strove to make both firm and mild, religious and practical. And what educators Mary and Joseph would have been, if Christ had had any real need of education! Mary with so deep and loving a heart; Joseph with so upright, so noble a soul; both of them so wholly devoted to duty, to Jesus, to God, truly royal in their feelings and dispositions even more than by birth. In very truth, it is impossible to conceive of teachers more worthy of Christ, more enlightened by grace, and closer to the very thoughts of God.[323] St. Paul reminds Timothy [324] that, thanks to the pious zeal of his mother and his grandmother, who were Jews by birth, he had learned from childhood to know the Holy Scriptures. How we love to picture Mary helping Jesus to lisp His first prayers, then to read some Psalms and the Decalogue, recounting to Him the chief events of Jewish history, speaking to Him of His heavenly Father and His future rôle! But while so doing, the Mother of Christ "knew who He was and, though charged with the duty of instructing Him, she never forgot to adore Him." [325] It is cer-

[322] Farrar, *op. cit.*, I, 75.

[323] We are happy to quote the following remark of an Anglican theologian (J. S. Clemens, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ*, I, 299): "We cannot doubt that of all the Jewish mothers none could excel Mary ('blessed among women') in all such work," *i. e.*, to act as the first human teacher of her Divine Son. We are thankful also to Dr. Keim (*Geschichte Jesu*, I, 427), despite his Rationalism, and to Dr. Beyschlag (*Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., I, 50), despite his theological Liberalism, for admitting that Mary exercised a very real influence upon the Savior's mental and moral development.

[324] 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.

[325] Fouard, *La Vie de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, 2d ed., I, 107.

tain that more than one great man is deeply indebted for his glory to his maternal education; but Christ was infinitely more than a great man, and Mary herself was incapable of instructing Him in the strict sense of that term. At least it was at her side and that of St. Joseph that He began to train Himself in obedience,—*"erat subditus illis,"* [326]—while awaiting the time when the harsh school of suffering, of which the Epistle to the Hebrews [327] speaks, should perfect that virtue in Him.

Christ's parents had an educational function to perform, and at the start it was in one of the most interesting forms: that of a loving mother and of a tenderly devoted foster-father initiating their little one in the language of their people, teaching Him to lisp the name of God and both their names, until He developed by Himself, at home and out of doors, a knowledge of the national tongue. As we remarked already,[328] the language of Palestine was no longer the Hebrew of the Sacred Books, which for a considerable time had become a dead liturgical language, as Latin is with us; but Aramaic, in the form which that Semitic dialect had in Galilee. Nevertheless, at a very early age, no doubt, Jesus learned the real Hebrew, especially by reading the Bible in that sacred tongue. Of this we have manifest proof in some of His Scriptural quotations, which are made directly from the Hebrew original.[329]

It is asserted that Greek was spoken rather commonly in Galilee, especially in the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias, not far from Nazareth. That language had penetrated the country little by little, following the conquests of Alexander the Great, and its progress became more rapid under the influence of the Herods, who were attracted to the Hellenic civilization. Jesus had learned it, too, probably in boyhood. Two of His "brothers," or cousins, St. James the Less and St. Jude, have

[326] Luke 2:51.
[327] Heb. 5:8.
[328] See pages 161 sqq.
[329] Cfr. Matt. 27:46; Mark 12:29 f.

each left us one epistle written in that idiom, and everything inclines us to believe that they knew it long before becoming Apostles. It was in Greek that Christ must have conversed with the Roman centurion,[330] with the "Hellenes" spoken of in the Fourth Gospel,[331] with Pilate, and others.

In the Gospels the Savior is called "the carpenter's son," [332] or, according to an interesting variant of St. Mark,[333] merely "the carpenter," and Celsus [334] did not fail to employ his gross irony on this subject. How touching it is to contemplate the Incarnate Word undergoing an apprenticeship in this rough trade under the guidance of His foster-father! Herein Christ acquired real knowledge, passing through the discipline of manual labor, which is a fine and noble educator. St. Justin Martyr [335] describes Him as making plows and yokes. It was probably about His twelfth year, if not earlier, that He received the first lessons from His foster-father and trained Himself in the trade which enabled Him, after the death of Joseph, to meet His mother's needs and His own.[336]

According to all appearances, this first education which Christ received from Mary and Joseph was continued and supplemented in a very modest degree by the school proper. Everything inclines us to believe that, as in nearly every town of Palestine, there was at that time in Nazareth close to the synagogue, a school in which the *hazzan* or beadle taught children the elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and chiefly the Israelite faith and morals, for the basis of that instruction was essentially religious. Ordinary manuscript

[330] Matt. 8:5–13.
[331] John 12:21.
[332] Matt. 13:55.
[333] Mark 6:3.
[334] Origen, *Contr. Cels.*, VI, 36.
[335] *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 88.
[336] We had occasion above to say that, in the eyes of Our Lord's Jewish contemporaries, manual labor was in high esteem and that a great number of rabbis practiced trades of all sorts.

portions of the Bible served as classics.[337] But what could a poor country instructor teach Christ?

As we have already said, a certain number of young Israelites who intended to pursue the career, then so esteemed, of doctor of the law, spent some years attending the lectures at rabbinical academies in Jerusalem or other cities of Palestine. Such was the young Saul, the future St. Paul, who himself tells us [338] that he had studied "at the feet of Gamaliel." But Christ never attended these higher schools, and His intellectual training was not brought under the influence of any of the rabbis of that time. At Nazareth, where His whole youth was passed, they did not understand, when He emerged from His obscurity, whence He came by so extraordinary a wisdom.[339] At Jerusalem, which was the real home of rabbinical teaching, they knew He had never attended the upper schools.[340] What would the rabbis have been able to teach this "teacher without any teacher," as He has quite rightly been called? What need had He of their frequently paltry, trivial, and involved interpretations of the Sacred Books, of their ponderous and dull erudition, which scarcely deserved the name of knowledge? They were not the ones who could help Him grow in wisdom and in grace. If He rather often is given the title of *Rabbi* or *Rabboni* by His disciples,[341] or by those coming to implore His assistance,[342] or even by the members of the Sanhedrin,[343] it is because they recognize His amazing knowledge of the Scriptures and the law. Assuredly no one better deserved the title in Israel or in the whole world.

Much more consideration is due the synagogue, where re-

[337] On Jewish schools in the time of Christ, see page 145.

[338] Acts 22:3.

[339] Matt. 13:54; Mark 6:2 f.

[340] John 7:15.

[341] Matt. 26:25, 49; Mark 9:4; 11:21; 14:45; John 4:31; 9:2; 11:8; 20:16, etc.

[342] Mark 10:51, etc.

[343] John 3:2.

ligious education, after being begun in the family and pursued at the feet of a humble instructor, was continued, in modest proportions also, but capable of further enlightening a bright mind. May it be in this direction we should look to find one of the agencies of the Savior's intellectual and moral growth? From His public life we see that He often took part in the pious exercises of worship held in the synagogues on the Sabbath and on feast-days.[344] There He listened to the reading of the Bible and heard it explained by the minister. He was present after the services at the lively discussions that took place between the best educated of His fellow-townsmen upon such or such a passage of Scripture. We shall presently inquire what Our Lord might have owed to Holy Scripture for His interior information. But the arguments and discussions that revolved about it in the synagogue or elsewhere (the Talmud preserves numerous examples of the manner in which they were conducted) were hardly capable of enlarging any mind whatever. What knowledge, therefore, could Jesus have derived therefrom?

If there is one eminently educative book, assuredly it is the Bible, the "Book" *par excellence,* which has contributed to the training of so many great minds and whose every page opens the most superb vistas of God, man, and the world, time and eternity. In addition to hearing the Bible read publicly in the synagogue, the Savior, having reached young manhood, certainly must have often read it in private, for it was easy to borrow portions of the sacred volume from the chief of the synagogue or from the *hazzan.* His discourses show with what religious attention He had studied the Word of God and meditated on it. He quotes it on every occasion and always with wonderful appropriateness, astonishing His adversaries or reducing them to silence. The words which He employed to introduce His quotations: "Have you not read? . . .

[344] Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54, etc.

What is written in the law? how readest thou?" [345]—prove to what an extent He was familiar with the Scriptures. Therein He heard His heavenly Father's voice, saw His will and His designs; He fed His mind on the Bible. No one ever interpreted it with greater certainty, clearness, depth, and authority. His direct quotations and allusions are from all three three parts of Scripture; but the Psalms and the Prophets hold the place of honor.

Hence we may be sure that the Bible was for Jesus a fountain of living water refreshing His holy soul, a sweet and strengthening nourishment. But may we say that His reading and study really brought Him fresh knowledge? Inasmuch as He is the Divine Word, is it not He who illumined and inspired the sacred writers, even to the point of sometimes revealing to them the truths they proclaim? Is He not the very central figure of the Bible, as also its beginning and end? [346] It is His own history, His glorious and yet so sorrowful destiny, the anticipatory account of His human life, which He read therein. He could recognize Himself constantly in its pages, from the "protevangelium" [347] to the last page, in the figures as well as in the prophecies, and in the least events of His people's annals. It was, therefore, not this book that instructed and educated Him.

From simple probabilities we now pass to much safer ground, when we approach Christ's external experiences, those which He had personally in contact with nature and with the domestic, political, and social life about Him. From His tenderest years, He learned to read in the book of nature and the book of life as no one else was ever able to do, and from both, on every occasion, He drew ideas, comparisons, the

[345] Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3; 10:26.

[346] For the development of this striking idea, which cannot be too often repeated, see Appendix VIII.

[347] Gen. 3:15.

happiest descriptions, and most striking applications that adorn and enliven His teaching.[348] In this sense we can say:[349] "The man [in Jesus] revealed what the eye and ear of the child and youth observed . . . Nature and daily life spoke to His spiritual hearing a more ringing language than that which any other man has ever been able to hear."

Let us cite a few examples of these lessons which the Divine Boy of Nazareth received from the things about Him. Those he derived from nature are remarkable. How He seems to have loved nature, so gentle and beautiful in Galilee! It was after the manner of all noble, delicate souls. But nowhere is He touched or moved by merely external beauty. His artistic sense was, above all, religious. Everywhere in nature He beholds the vestige of the almighty and infinitely bountiful God.[350] The world of plants and animals provides Him with a solution of the gravest problems.[351] His parables especially disclose how attentive He was to the seemingly most insignificant details of the life of nature. It would easily take whole pages if one were to trace the Savior's experimental growth in these two directions. But there is no need. Who does not pleasantly recall to mind the lily of the field and its transient glory, the gently growing wheat, the cockle which an enemy sowed in a field, the fig tree with leaves but no fruit, the vine that must be pruned to bear more fruit, the birds of the air that sow not nor reap, but are bountifully nourished by God, the ravens also providentially receiving their food, the hen gathering her chicks under wings, the regular crowing of the cock at certain hours of the night, the foxes who have their lairs while the Son of Man has not where to lay His head, the sheep following their shepherd, and the things of inani-

[348] We shall have occasion to return to this question when we consider our Savior's method of teaching.

[349] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 443, 450.

[350] Matt. 6:26–30, etc.

[351] Matt. 13:24–30, 31 f., etc.

mate nature, the glowing sunset, the burning south wind, the lake, the mountains, and a hundred like features? Indeed we would not fully grasp Christ's mind and personal character if we failed to note the impressions which nature made on Him in His youth. Yet we will refrain from any exaggeration and will not explain the progress of the most perfect soul that ever appeared on earth, as if that development were due to the countryside of Nazareth and Galilee or to the habits of its plants or birds or other living things.

Christ also received in early childhood, and still more with advancing years, a special sort of education through the intermediary of the affairs of daily life, considered in its threefold aspect,—domestic, social, and political. These facts find a considerable place in His discourses and even in His simplest remarks. By merely opening His eyes, how many things He must gradually have learned! Ceremonies of the royal court as well as those of a village wedding; valuable clothing quickly becoming the prey of moths; the manner of making the commonest repairs; the management of large estates; the lamp set on a bracket; salt keeping food from spoiling; the practices of the market-place (two sparrows sold for an ass, five for two asses); the relations between workmen and employers; children's games, such as He Himself no doubt had played; the walls of houses broken through by thieves; the need of building on solid ground; the interminable prayers of the pagans; the work of the shepherd, of the laborer, of the fisherman: all this He observed, He was familiar with it, and profited by it for strengthening and adorning His teaching. We may quite correctly speak of Christ's education through the senses and by experience. His political impressions of that period are also reflected in His discourses. He knows that the tetrarch is sly as a fox, that the Jews are obliged to pay taxes to the Romans, that there are signs of the times, easy to observe and foreboding evil, and many other

things besides. But, to explain the growth of His mind and soul, how insufficient are all these details into which we have had to enter in connection with the more or less educative atmosphere of Christ's life!

May we also say that Christ owed part of His development to the experience of temptation? Certainly not to temptations like ours, because, being God-Man, being Holiness itself, He could not be accessible to anything resembling concupiscence under any form. By virtue of the Hypostatic Union, the most perfect harmony reigned in His whole being, so that He never had to undergo the storms of passion. The Gospels tell us explicitly that He was tempted,[352] but it was without sin, as St. Paul says,[353] because it was never possible for moral evil to breathe upon Him who was born "the Holy." [354] At least there is no doubt but that His temptations and sufferings, by the repeated victories which they occasioned, contributed their share to His growth in wisdom and grace.

A much greater effect was produced, from the time of His early youth, by His personal reflection on what He saw and heard, particularly on His rôle of Messias, on His relations with God.

In truth, it is especially in this direction, that of Christ's Personality itself, that we must look for the most effective reason and essential cause of His development. All the rest could be nothing more than accessory and superficial. Let us do this justice to most of the critics: they themselves admit it was so, and sometimes they say so in fine words. One of them writes: "We have just indicated all the influences under which Jesus grew up. . . . But it would be vain to seek to explain His Personality as the natural product of their combined action. This mechanical or physiological explanation

[352] Matt. 4: 1–11; Mark 1: 12 f.; Luke 4: 1–13.
[353] Heb. 4: 15.
[354] Luke 1: 35.

never suffices to explain a great genius . . . There is besides in this great individuality, along with the external actions which influenced it from without, an internal force, a *nescio quid divinum* coming from within and eluding any evaluation. But this primitive element, spontaneous and divine, is what made Christ's originality. [What element does he mean?] The distinctive mark of Jesus is the having brought into the world and preserved to the very end a conscience full of God, that never felt itself separated from Him. If He found God so surely in the Old Testament, if He saw Him so clearly in nature, that is because He had Him in Himself and lived intimately with Him in perpetual converse." [355]

These lines contain some very correct ideas, and we are pleased to observe that our most eminent adversaries recognize that the true principle of Our Lord's growth must be sought in His exceptional and unique nature. But how incomplete and imperfect the avowal is! They are willing to see in Jesus Christ only something human, consequently something relative, whereas He possesses something absolute and divine, divinity itself.

In fact, the close relations that Christ had with God were not only those which prayer and meditation establish between God and His faithful friends,—what can we say of the fervor and ecstasy of the prayers of the Incarnate Word, of the illuminations which His mind and soul continually derived therefrom,—but those of an identity of nature, of a strictly divine generation and filiation. Let us not, therefore, seek on earth, in men or things, in nature or history, the final reason of the development of Christ's formation. Let us look for it in His heavenly origin. Did He not say [356] that His teaching was that of the Father who sent Him, and is it not in the

[355] Auguste Sabatier, in Lichtenberger's *Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses,* VIII, 366 f. See also Stapfer, *Jésus-Christ avant son Ministère,* 2d ed., pp. 186 f.; Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 450.

[356] John 7: 16.

most literal sense that He is the Son of that great God? His real educator is, then, the living God; it is consequently Himself. The milieu,—that is, the country, family, school, synagogue, the lessons of experience, the reading of the Bible,—certainly contributed something to the Savior's moral education; but His principal instructor was the Word. Outside of that divine formation, it is not possible to discover the cause of Christ's marvelous development. "The man in this divine Personality was not separated from the God. From time to time and according to diverse occasions, He opened the eye of His soul to the light of the Divine Word, whom He had essentially present in Him. There He read the work to be accomplished or the word to be uttered. Thus to natural and human knowledge was added divine knowledge, to which He had recourse when events demanded it, and in keeping with the laws traced by Providence itself. These events were at all times in harmony with the regular phases of human life; and that is why the Evangelist remarks that the Child grew in wisdom before God and men, as if to say that though He had God's infinite knowledge at His service, the man in Jesus Christ made use of it only in proportion to His needs and according to the laws that regulated the development of His human nature and of His divine mission. Hence there was nothing abnormal or fantastic in Him. As a Child He neither speaks nor acts like a man; such unnatural precociousness would have inspired every one with fear; He is pleased to be a child in every way. As the years roll on, the sight of the world, contact with men, the habit of meditation will gradually develop His human knowledge, and, in complete conformity with the will of God, He will perfect this knowledge by the aid of the eternal light He bears within Himself." [357]

We must now conclude. Have we solved the problem of Christ's intellectual and spiritual growth? How could we dare

[357] Le Camus, *The Life of Christ*, I, 228.

answer this question affirmatively, since from the start we acknowledged that we are in the presence of an insoluble psychological problem? At least, by explaining St. Luke's texts, by consulting the Fathers and the best theological authorities, by trying with all respect to penetrate the mind and soul of the Savior,—while mindful of His theandric character, which, in the matter of His development, constitutes a situation unique in history,—we hope that we have ever so little lifted the veil which enshrouds this profound mystery. The strange conception which the critics make of that growth will also serve, in a negative way, to give us a better glimpse of the truth.[358]

[358] See Appendix XXIII.

CHAPTER III

The Family of Jesus

"NAZARETH, where He was brought up," says St. Luke.[359] What a volume in that simple phrase! Let us continue its development, grouping together certain details relative to the Savior's human family and the life which He led with his parents in the quiet town where God sheltered Him.

In the first place, we will endeavor to sketch a spiritual portrait of His parents. The brush of an artist, or, better yet, the soul of a saint would be needed for so delicate a task. But the sacred writers will serve us as guides in this psychological study, which simply groups the scattered pieces of information supplied by the Evangelists, including what we have already considered. The inspired writers, while maintaining a remarkable reserve on the subject of Mary and Joseph, make known enough to permit us to draw certain conclusions concerning them.

Their pathetic, dramatic, and sometimes even tragic descriptions show us the Virgin Mary, under most varied circumstances, in her chastely maternal relations with Jesus. From these descriptions there emerges a moral physiognomy of ideal beauty which has no like anywhere, since no other creature has been favored in the same measure nor so showered with graces by God. The titles, Mother of Christ, Mother

[359] Luke 4:16. Greek, *τεθραμμένος* (Vulg., *nutritus*). Perhaps the reading *ἀνατεθραμμένος*, which we find in several important manuscripts, deserves the preference, because it more directly refers to education in all its forms, whereas *τεθραμμένος* refers rather to bodily growth. This compound verb is, moreover, employed by St. Luke in several other places. (Cfr. Acts 7:20, 21; 22:3).

of Our Lord, Mother of the Word, Mother of the Creator, Mother of God, which Catholic piety addresses to her, would of themselves be enough to explain her perfections. But her great personal merit consists in having fully corresponded with so many privileges and blessings and with having nobly borne the weight of an unequaled dignity without, as it were, being crushed by it.

We should be greatly embarrassed if we had to determine which virtue shone most brilliantly in that incomparable soul. Was it her faith? *"Beata quae credidisti,"* [360] said Elizabeth in reply to her greeting. Mary immediately, with her whole heart and soul, believed in the possibility of a miracle infinitely above the powers of nature, whereas Zachary and others had hesitated to accept heavenly promises which were comparatively easy of fulfilment.

Was it her virginal purity, declining to be marred even to receive for compensation the signal honor of divine maternity? In almost countless paintings, many of them by the greatest masters, Mary is represented as kneeling in prayer while an angel respectfully holds out a white lily to her. That, however, is but an imperfect symbol of the whiteness and holiness of her soul.

Was not her principal virtue the boundless humility which prompted her to declare herself the handmaid, the "slave" of the Lord, at the very moment when she was most glorified? *"Ecce ancilla Domini!"* She was always singularly modest, silent, reserved, gladly keeping herself in the background during her Son's public life, as appears in the Gospel narrative, except in a few rare circumstances, which we shall have occasion to point out later. It would almost seem that the sacred writers had agreed to speak of her as little as possible after the Savior's infancy, when He would no longer have so much need of His mother's care. What a contrast between this deep

[360] Luke 1:45.

humility of Mary and the proud, boastful conduct of the mothers of heroes and great personages of history!

And what are we to say of Mary's sublime and unreserved obedience to an order which, even though entirely honorable for her, yet to a certain extent cast her life into the unknown and was to occasion her so much suffering? The early Fathers contrast it with Eve's ill-fated disobedience.[361] What of her wonderful courage when she understood the cruel doubts that beset Joseph in her regard, then during the flight into Egypt and her sojourn there, and finally at the foot of the cross?

What praise is due the noble calmness with which she received the divine proposal, conveyed by the angel Gabriel! She was slightly disturbed at first, but promptly recovered herself; then, when she had grasped the full extent of the part confided to her, she gave way to neither alarm nor joyous transport. Gladness, it is true, forms the substance of her *Magnificat,* but it is a restrained gladness. She remains self-controlled on every occasion in which the Evangelists introduce her. Following St. Luke, we have twice remarked her depth of soul, in which the various incidents of Christ's history left indelible impressions. Our earliest ecclesiastical writers laud her simplicity,[362] her unalterable gentleness,[363] her remarkable knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures,[364] of which her canticle furnishes the best proof. To all this we may add her spirit of prayer and meditation. But we will not attempt to describe her maternal love for the most perfect and lovable of sons, for it is truly ineffable and surpasses all human thought. What is the use of further details? It is

[361] See especially St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 160; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* III, xxii, 4 and V, xix, 1; Tertullian, *De Carne Christi,* 17; Origen, *Hom. in Luc.,* VIII.

[362] St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.,* V, xix, 1.

[363] Origen, *Hom. in Luc.,* VIII.

[364] Origen, *Hom. in Luc.,* VI.

enough to say that, "in a word, so far as St. Mary is portrayed to us in Scripture, she is as we should have expected, the most tender, the most faithful, humble, patient, and loving of women." [365] Could she have been other than the ideal daughter of Sion and the noblest of creatures, who bore the Incarnate Word in her virginal womb, nourished Him with her milk, took part in His education, passed thirty years at His side, enjoying His presence, His conversation, His filial devotion? [366]

What difference does it make, in view of all this, if we have so limited a knowledge of her history, whether before her Annunciation [367] or after the Savior's Ascension? Her life, so far as it affects the annals of the Redemption, was interior rather than external. Let us be satisfied to know that she was the daughter of pious Israelites, St. Joachim and St. Anne, both of whom belonged to the race of David; that, at a very early age, she was presented to the Lord and brought up in one of the buildings of the Temple; that after the Ascension, she lived with the beloved disciple, whom Jesus had given her as an adopted son, and that she died at Ephesus according to some, or, more probably, according to another tradition, at Jerusalem, where her tomb is pointed out in the Cedron valley, a little north of Gethsemane.[368] When she appears for the last

[365] G. Grove in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, II, 264.

[366] See Appendix XXIV.

[367] The apocryphal gospels distort rather than recount it, as they do for the childhood of Christ. See the *Protevangelium Iacobi*, 1–11; the History of Joseph the Carpenter, 3–4; the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, 1–6; Hoffmann, *Das Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen*, pp. 5–66; Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, pp. 8–21. They do not agree as to Mary's birthplace (Jerusalem according to some, Nazareth according to others) nor as to her age when she received the angel's visit (14, 15, or 16 years). Sometimes they speak of her beauty, following St. Melito of Sardis (*"Maria pura, pulchra"*). Cf. Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[368] The collection "Les Saints," published under the direction of M. Henri Joly, of the Institute, contains under the title *La Sainte Vierge*, an interesting Life of the Blessed Virgin by Fr. de la Broise, S. J. See also Neubert, "Marie," in *L'Eglise Antenicéenne*, 1908.

time in the inspired writings, she is in the upper room with the Apostles, disciples, and holy women, preparing to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.[369]

St. Joseph, too, possessed qualities and virtues befitting him for the double mission that Divine Providence had entrusted to him regarding the two most perfect beings who ever appeared on earth. But to sketch his portrait is still more difficult than in Mary's case, because the Evangelists are extremely sparing of information about him. However, the cautious glimpse which St. Matthew allows us in the first two chapters of his Gospel, discloses to us a soul of marvelous beauty. He characterizes him in a general way by the epithet "just," [370] which tells us that he was a faithful and exact observer of the Jewish law. Besides that, by four successive incidents [371] the Evangelist emphasizes the promptness and perfection of his obedience to four divine commands, in the face of difficulties that made it particularly meritorious. The action which he purposed taking with regard to his betrothed wife, before the angel acquainted him with the fact that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messias, reveals his very keen feeling of personal honor and a heart full of delicate tenderness and courage to support that sorrowful trial. What is most beautiful and touching in his character is the generous love he felt for his virgin spouse and for the Divine Child whose foster-father he had become; this love he ceaselessly showed towards them in every manner. Despite the humble condition to which he had been reduced by the vicissitudes of Israel's history, he was in reality the legal heir to the throne of David and consequently the foremost personage of his nation: a title which he deserved even more by nobility of soul and

[369] Acts 1 : 14.
[370] Matt. 1 : 19.
[371] Matt. 1 : 24; 2 : 14, 21 f.

holiness than by his birth. In fact, his feelings and moral elevation were of a rare perfection.

Outside the accounts of the Savior's infancy, the Gospel makes no mention of St. Joseph except in a very indirect way.[372] As in the case of Mary, so regarding him the apocryphal Gospels abound in extraordinary details, most unlikely and for the most part evidently false. We will not follow them and their commonplace marvels.[373]

What precise idea can we form of Joseph's occupation, designated in St. Matthew's text[374] by the word τέκτων? This substantive, taken by itself, is rather vague and may stand for a worker in iron as well as for a worker in wood. St. Ambrose, St. Hilary, and other interpreters have adopted the former of these two meanings. But it is more in accord with tradition to make of Our Lord's foster-father, and of Jesus Himself, a worker in wood. It is generally believed that they were carpenters, as appears from a text of St. Justin already cited.[375] They both, then, worked with saw and plane and axe and other tools of their trade.

This is all that the early documents tell us on the sub-

[372] Cfr. Matt. 12:46; John 1:45 and 6:42. In Mark 6:3, the correct reading seems to be: "the carpenter" (meaning Jesus), and not: "the carpenter's son."

[373] See the History of Joseph the Carpenter, chaps. 2–9; the *Protevangelium Iacobi,* chap. 2; Pseudo-Matthew, etc., and also Hofmann, *Leben Jesu nach den Apokryphen,* pp. 53–66; W. Bauer, *Leben Jesu,* pp. 4–8. One of their most remarkable errors consists of making him a decrepit old man, eighty-nine years of age, when he married Mary.

[374] Matt. 13:55; cfr. Mark 6:3. The Vulgate translates it by *faber.*

[375] *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 88. "Joseph found work among his fellow-townsmen of Nazareth and also among the peasants who frequented the market-place. The nature of his labors may be imagined from what we know of carpenters' work among the Jews: the squaring of beams for the support of balconies; yokes, wagon shafts and goads; beds, chests, troughs; boxes in which the scribes, merchants, and rabbis kept their papers. These are the various objects which the Mishna tells us were made by carpenters. On the basis of these data we may sketch the work of Joseph the carpenter, of Jesus the carpenter." Schwalm, *La Vie Privée du Peuple Juif à l'Époque de Jésus-Christ,* p. 230.

ject of Mary's spouse and Christ's foster-father. But is it possible for us to form an exact idea of the life which this august "earthly trinity," as it has been called, led at Nazareth when Jesus became a charming boy, then a perfect young man, drawing down divine favor upon Himself and winning the kindly regard of men? Up to a certain point we can, according to what we know of their souls and what we may learn from the customs of the time, which in large part have remained unchanged at Nazareth.

It was, first of all, a life of poverty, consequently of humility and obscurity. Some have exaggerated this poverty of the Holy Family, confusing it with destitution and indigence. Later on, when Christ leaves everything to carry the glad tidings through Palestine, leading the harsh life of a missionary, He can truly say that the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.[376] St. Paul, too, speaks of His poverty: *"Propter vos egenus factus est."* [377] But, through St. Joseph's brave labor and through that of Christ Himself when He grew up, the life of the Holy Family was not that of the poor who are utterly destitute. In general, Orientals are satisfied with little, whether in the matter of dwelling-place or clothing or food.[378] Being simple and moderate, they could live at small expense. It is relatively easy for us, therefore, following the indications already given, to picture what were the house, furniture, clothes, and food of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Their life was one of labor, as naturally follows from what we have just said regarding the occupation pursued by St. Joseph and by Jesus, by which they were able to meet their

[376] Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58.

[377] 2 Cor. 8:9.

[378] The Jewish writer Philo, who lived a short time before Our Lord, tells us (*In Flaccum,* ed. Frankfort, pp. 977 f.) that, though his coreligionists loved to indulge in habits of luxury at Alexandria, the greatest simplicity of living was the general rule among them, to such an extent that many of their homes were not even provided with table-knives.

modest household needs. Our Lord and His foster-father have thus rightly become patrons and models for Christian workmen. We have seen, moreover, that manual labor was at that time in high esteem in Christ's country and that the most famous rabbis were desirous of practicing it. Mary was wholly devoted to her numerous household duties. No one better fulfilled the Roman matron's motto: *"Domi mansit, lanam fecit."* [379] It is allowable to suppose that in connection with Joseph's house was a garden which he cultivated in his spare time and which increased his modest income. His help was no doubt sought at periods of considerable agricultural activity. He must also have been called to neighboring hamlets for building or urgent repairs connected with his trade.[380]

Theirs was a life of ardent piety, of constant union with God, which the angels in Heaven beheld with delight. In the home at Nazareth they prayed much and often, and with unspeakable fervor. With them, more than in the case of other families of Israel, religion entered into the smallest acts of life. Everything nourished their piety. On the Sabbath and on feast-days, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were present at the services in the synagogue, edifying the others by their deportment and deep recollection. On those occasions they dressed, according to the custom, in their finest clothes of bright colors,[381] Christ and St. Joseph wearing their *talleth* or prayer cloak and Mary her long white veil.

Lastly, between the members of the Holy Family there

[379] In his Epistle to Titus, 2:5, St. Paul expresses a wish that Christian women be οἰκούργοι, *domus curam habentes,* as the Vulgate translates it. Mary possessed this quality in the highest degree. In her humble sphere she exemplified that decription of a "strong woman" (*i. e.,* an ideal woman) which so fittingly ends the Book of Proverbs (31:10–31).

[380] The apocryphal gospels are quite right in making these various suppositions.

[381] In 1914, first at Jerusalem on the day of the Jewish Pasch, then at Nazareth on the day of the Greek Easter, we saw a great number of the people of those two cities, men as well as women, dressed in many-colored garments which presented a novel sight in the bright sunlight.

was a sacred, loving union, a reciprocal devotedness that knew no bounds. This simple statement is enough. We would not dare attempt to describe the fatherly and motherly love of Christ's parents, nor the filial affection which He showed them in return. Suffice it to say that with other relations, with the neighbors, with all, the Holy Family's dealings were full of the most perfect cordiality and a practical charity that, in case of need, did not hesitate to make sacrifices.

May these few details, superficial and incomplete as they necessarily are, throw a little light on the hidden light of Christ! We would add that it was, in short, a very happy life. It would be a curious mistake to suppose that the life which the Divine Boy, His mother, and His foster-father passed together was morose and sad. What Jesus says about joyous family gatherings, He first experienced at Nazareth. How He must have delighted in the company of such a mother and such a guardian! He was the gentlest and most respectful of sons. Mary showed herself the most loving of mothers. In later years, in her long meditations, how often she must have been filled with joy at the recollection of those blessed years at Nazareth! Joseph devoted himself without reserve to those two beings whom God deigned to entrust to his care. Upon this holy group Heaven's choicest favors flowed constantly; in it there blossomed all the virtues of earth.

But one day mourning entered that home, unique in this world, when the virginal husband, the foster-father, gently expired in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Everything leads us to believe, and it is commonly held, that Joseph died before the Savior began His public life. This seems to be a reasonable conclusion from the fact that he is not included in St. John's mention of the Savior's kinsmen at the time of His first miracle,[382] nor is he referred to in other passages relative

[382] John 2: 12.

to a still later period.[383] Now more than ever does Jesus surround His mother with gentleness and respect; more than ever does Mary show her mother's love toward her Divine Son. They weep together and console each other.[384]

In various passages [385] the Gospels and other New Testament writings mention the Savior's "brethren"; the first two Gospels even give their names.[386] St. Matthew and St. Mark speak also of His "sisters." [387] Just what meaning should we attach to these expressions? According to what we saw above, and notwithstanding the contrary declarations of Helvidius, Jovinian, most modern Rationalists, and even a considerable number of orthodox Protestants,[388] it is evident that we cannot interpret the words as if they meant brothers and sisters strictly so called, children that Joseph had by Mary after the birth of Jesus. The perpetual virginity of Mary is too well attested to permit us to fall into so flagrant a mistake. Jesus was the only Son of Mary, who gave birth to Him under altogether supernatural conditions. Furthermore, in the Scriptural texts we have mentioned above, there is absolutely nothing to indicate that these "brothers" and "sisters" were children of the Blessed Virgin. Had they been so closely related

[383] Matt. 13:55 f.; Mark 6:3.

[384] The apocryphal History of Joseph the Carpenter relates at great length and with an inexhaustible wealth of details the death of Our Lord's foster-father, who is said to have reached the age of a hundred and eleven years. We are told that Christ was eighteen years old when Joseph died.

[385] In ten different passages: Matt. 12:46 and 13:55; Mark 3:31 and 6:3; Luke 8:19; John 2:12 and 7:3; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19.

[386] Matt. 13:55; James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude.

[387] *Ibid.* St. Epiphanius, *Haer.*, LXXVIII, mentions two of them, called Anna and Salome, or Esther and Thamar. The apocryphal gospels also speak of two of them; but the expression used by St. Matthew, "all his sisters," would lead one to suppose they were more numerous. Theophylact, in his commentary, counts three. See Donohoe, *Apocryphal and Legendary Life of Christ*, p. 27, note 4.

[388] See Appendix XXV. It is regrettable to meet among these last several commentators who usually show a spirit of faith, but who have let themselves be carried away by prejudices arising from what they call the "Mariolatry" of Catholics.

to her, it would be impossible to understand why Jesus, just before dying, confided His beloved mother to the Apostle John,[389] and not to some one of His own brothers.

Considered from this general viewpoint, the question is solved as soon as it is proposed. But we have to explain why the sacred writers, in reference to Jesus, used the terms "brothers" and "sisters," which are apt to give rise to so grave misunderstandings. Philology furnishes a ready answer. "Hebrew is not as rich in expressions as are our western languages, as Greek and Latin. It is especially poor when it comes to expressing degrees of relationship; it has no special word to designate *cousins,* and when it wishes to speak of them, it calls them brothers. This is an indubitable fact, of which no Hebraist is ignorant,[390] and which is known even to simple readers of the Bible. The Hebrew word *'ahh* applies not only to a brother in the strict sense of the term, but to any relative: a nephew,[391] a cousin, [392] a husband.[393] It has an even more extended meaning: it is used to express that the man spoken of belongs to a people of the same race,[394] that he is an ally [395] or simply a friend.[396] The name of brothers was also given to those who performed the same duties." [397] It is true the New Testament authors "wrote in Greek; but it is equally true that often their language is merely Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic in Greek dress, especially in the four Gospels. Their

[389] John 19:26 f.

[390] Gesenius, the celebrated Hebrew lexicographer, writes on this subject in his *Thesaurus Linguae Hebraicae et Chaldaicae,* I, 61: *"Fratris nomen apud Hebraeos late patet; est enim cognatus et consanguineus quicunque."*

[391] Gen. 14:16, Lot is called Abraham's brother, although he was his nephew, according to Gen. 12:5; 19:12, 15; Jacob, Laban's nephew, is likewise called his brother.

[392] Num. 16:10.

[393] Cant. 4:9; Esther 15:12; King Assuerus calls Esther his "sister."

[394] Num. 20:14.

[395] Amos 1:9.

[396] Job 6:15.

[397] 3 Kings 9:13.

style abounds in Hebraisms and their sentences are replete with Oriental locutions. To designate degrees of relationship in particular, they employ the terms that are found in the Old Testament, and they make use of the word *adelphos* (brother) as the Septuagint did, to render the Hebrew word *'ahh,* whatever may be the meaning attached to it.[398] The sense of the word 'brother,' in the New Testament, is extended instead of being restricted . . . Christ and the Apostles gave the name of brothers to all Christians." [399] This argument does not admit of reply. "It is philologically certain that one may not conclude from the word 'brother,' as used in the Old or New Testament, that he who is thus qualified is the offspring of the same father or mother as the person whose brother he is said to be. This is a noteworthy point . . . and beyond question." [400]

This being granted, let us make inquiry of Christian tradition. We have already drawn attention to the energy with which it has maintained the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. However, tradition ceases to be unanimous when there is question of determining exactly the degree of relationship represented by the words "brothers" and "sisters," applied to certain of Jesus' kinsfolk. In early times there were formed two principal theories on this point, very different from each other: they usually bear the names of St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome, their most famous defenders. According to St. Epiphanius,[401] who appeals to the testimony of St. Hegesippus,[402] these "brothers" and "sisters" were children of St. Joseph

[398] The word ἀνεψιός appears only once in the New Testament, under St. Paul's pen, Col. 4: 10, to designate Mark, the "cousin" of Barnabas.

[399] Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., V, 403–406. What we have just said regarding the noun "brother" applies equally to the word "sister."

[400] *Ibid.,* p. 406.

[401] *Haer.,* LXXXVIII, 7.

[402] See Eusebius, *H. E.,* II, 23; III, xx, 32; IV, 22. St. Hegesippus lived in the middle of the second century.

by a previous marriage; consequently Christ's adoptive brothers. Origen,[403] St. Gregory of Nyssa,[404] and St. Hilary [405] adopted this opinion and, as several apocryphal gospels also adopted it,[406] St. Jerome blamed St. Epiphanius for allowing himself to be influenced by the *"deliramenta apocryphorum."*

It was in his vigorous treatise "Against Helvidius" that the learned Latin Doctor refuted the above theory, and he did it so successfully that St. Augustine, who had at first accepted it, promptly changed his opinion.[407] According to Jerome's interpretation, almost unanimously accepted by Catholic exegetes and theologians,[408] the "brothers" and "sisters" of Christ were simply His cousins, born of the marriage of Mary,—the Blessed Virgin's elder sister according to some,[409] her sister-in-law according to others,[410]—and Cleophas, who seems to be none other than Alpheus.[411] Not only is there no Gospel passage which would lead us to suppose that the Savior's foster-father, before marrying the Blessed Virgin, had contracted a previous marriage by which he had several chil-

[403] *Hom. in Matth.,* XIII, 55; *Hom. in Luc.,* VII; *Hom. in Ioan.,* II, 22.

[404] *In Christi Resurrect.,* II.

[405] *Comment. in Matth.,* 1:23 f.

[406] The *Protevangelium Iacobi,* 8:3; 9:2; 17:1 f.; Pseudo-Matthew, 8:4; 42:1; the History of Joseph the Carpenter, 2, 3, 14, 20; the Arab Gospel of the Infancy, 45, etc.

[407] Cfr. *Quaest. in Matth.,* XVII, iii, 2; *Tractat. in Joan.,* X, 2, 2 and XXXVIII, 3.—St. John Chrysostom had a similar experience, as we see from his *Homil. in Matth.,* III, and his *Comment. in Gal.,* I, near the end. He says explicitly that James and Simon were cousins (ἀνεψιοί) of Christ.

[408] The question we are now considering has been well treated by Corluy, *Les Frères de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (extract from the *Études* of the Jesuit Fathers), 1878; by Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., V, 397–420; by Durand, S.J., *"Les Frères du Seigneur,"* in the *Revue Biblique,* 1908, pp. 9–35.

[409] According to the common interpretation of John 19:25. See Fillion, *L'Évangile de S. Jean,* pp. 352 f.

[410] Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *H. E.,* III, ii, 4; St. Epiphanius, *Haer.,* LXXXVIII, 7, and others, say that Cleophas was St. Joseph's brother.

[411] In fact, the two names seem to be merely a different transcription into Greek (the form Κλωπᾶς, Clopas, is the most authentic), of the Hebrew Halpai. Not all commentators, however, accept this identification.

dren, but, as St. Jerome says, there was, though to a lesser degree than in Mary's case, a real fitness also in St. Joseph having preserved a constant virginity. "Joseph himself was virginal because of Mary, in order that He who was to be virginal *par excellence,* should be born of a marriage where husband and wife were both virginal."

There will always remain some obscurity on these points, and that is what explains the fluctuations of tradition; but the essential fact is perfectly clear. Furthermore, it is possible, nay, even probable, that the "brethren" of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels and other New Testament writings were not all related to Him in the same degree. This supposition would partly explain why many of them for a while refused to believe in His mission, as will be seen later on, while others merited becoming His Apostles.

CHAPTER IV

The Human Personality of Jesus Christ [412]

ONCE more we quote St. Luke's words: "Nazareth, where He was brought up," [413] *i. e.*, where Christ's human nature attained that degree of development willed by God that He might inaugurate and exercise His ministry under the most favorable conditions. Before the hour is come for the Savior to quit this sweet and holy asylum, it will not be amiss to study His human Personality in its various aspects. We shall then be the better able to appreciate, on the one hand the powerful means which He had at His disposal to accomplish His work; on the other hand, the rapidity and the amplitude of His success. It is as an exegete, not from the strictly theological point of view, that we will treat this beautiful theme.[414] But the Gospels are abundant sources from which we can draw the details we need.

While we were occupied with the question of Our Lord's intellectual growth, we did not for a moment forget that the subject was the God-Man. During this present inquiry we will also constantly bear in mind that Christ's human nature is inseparable from the divinity, which penetrated it and animated it with a higher life. But in Jesus, as in the case of all sons of Adam, the human personality,—a personality extremely rich and noble, the richest and noblest that ever existed,—was composed of two distinct parts, namely, a body and a soul, which were, so far as compatible with the Hypostatic Union, of the same condition as ours. It is therefore of that sacred body and that holy soul we are about to speak.

[412] See Appendix XXVI.

[413] Luke 4: 16.

[414] See the chief theologians, in the treatise *De Incarnatione.*

I. The Body of the God-Man

"Verbum caro factum est." St. John did not recoil before the realism of that expression.[415] Verily it places the infinite love of the Incarnate Word into wonderful relief. As man, He whom St. Paul with a certain emphasis calls *Homo Christus Jesus,*[416] possessed a true and very real body,[417] like unto ours in aspect and form, but enjoying a unique privilege, that of being extraordinarily holy, extraordinarily pure, on account of having been formed by the Divine Spirit Himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Thanks to St. Luke, we have in a way witnessed the successive transformations of that sacred body, until Jesus reached the age of maturity.[418] Precisely because of the supernatural mode of its formation, and in so far as it was the organ and instrument of the Divine Word, Christ's body was endowed with a perfect constitution, superior, so it has been said, to that of the first man when he came forth from the hands of the Creator. The information which the Gospels furnish on Our Lord's ceaseless activity during His public life, His frequent journeys, His numberless privations, His preaching day after day, all requiring of Him a considerable expenditure of physical energy,[419] presupposes that His body must have been strong and healthy. Moreover, nowhere do the sacred writers give us reason to think that Christ was subject to disease in any form. This we can understand, since His divinely formed body and

[415] John 1:14.

[416] "Ανθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς; 1 Tim. 2:5.

[417] To-day there is no call to prove that our Lord's body was not a mere phantom, as the ancient Docetae affirmed. No one denies that He truly was "partaker of flesh and blood," as St. Paul expresses it (Heb. 2:14). It is the contrary error that has to be fought, since the critics insist on Christ's human nature at the expense of His divinity and undertake to make of Him a man like other men, save for certain exceptional qualities.

[418] Luke 3:22: ἀνήρ, "a grown-up man."

[419] By themselves the details given by St. Mark on two different occasions

members did not bear within them any germ of corruption. Nevertheless, although it was not befitting that the God-Man should be subject to such of our bodily infirmities as, in consequence of original sin, deform human nature,[420] yet the plan of the Incarnation required that He be capable of suffering.[421] By reason of its very delicacy, which was one of its perfections, Christ's body possessed in the highest degree a sensitiveness which heightened and aggravated physical suffering. Hence during the Passion He suffered the most cruel agonies. But He did not wait until then to know suffering. On different occasions the Evangelists tell us that the Savior experienced hunger,[422] thirst,[423] weariness after a long journey,[424] the need of sleep.[425] Like us, He was subject to death; and the prospect of it was intensely repugnant to Him, as it is to us.[426] Of course, in His case it was a death accompanied by unspeakable sufferings.

Although His body was usually subject to the same laws as ours, it was sometimes free from them. Thus, in one celebrated instance, He walked on the surface of Lake Genesareth,[427] and during His Transfiguration "his face did shine as the sun and his garments became white as snow." [428] After His Resurrection His sacred flesh acquired new qualities, which the Evangelists indicate and which theologians designate by the technical expressions of subtility, brightness, impassibility, and agility. It was with this glorified body, but

(3:20 and 6:31) are quite characteristic, for they show that during certain periods Christ had not a moment's rest.

[420] St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 3a, qu. 14, art. 4.

[421] Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:26, 46; Acts 17:3; 1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1, etc.

[422] Matt. 4:2; Mark 3:20; 6:31.

[423] John 4:7; 19:28.

[424] John 4:6.

[425] Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23.

[426] Matt. 26:37–42; Mark 14:33–39; Luke 22:41–44; cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, 3a, qu. 46, art. 6.

[427] Matt. 14:25–32; Mark 6:48–51; John 6:19–21.

[428] Matt. 17:2; cfr. Mark 9:2; Luke 9:29.

still carrying the stigmata of the Passion,[429] that the Divine Master ascended into Heaven [430] and that He will return at the end of the world.[431]

Here and there the sacred writers by incidental remarks enable us to see the posture and gestures of the God-Man. We see Him addressing the crowds or His disciples, now standing,[432] now seated.[433] At times He reclines on a couch, as was the Jewish custom, to partake of a meal,[434] or He stretches at full length on the deck of a little boat, with His head resting on a pillow.[435] At other times we see Him on His knees [436] or prostrate on the ground [437] in prayer. More often the gestures which the Evangelists describe are those of His hands, in the act of breaking bread before distributing it,[438] taking the consecrated cup and passing it to the Apostles,[439] blessing little children [440] and His disciples,[441] touching the sick to cure them,[442] or the dead to bring them back to life,[443]

[429] John 20:27.

[430] Acts 1:9, 11.

[431] Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62.

[432] Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24; John 7:37; 14:31.

[433] Matt. 5:1; 13:2; 24:3; 26:55; Mark 4:1; 12:41; 13:3; Luke 4:20; 5:17; John 4:6; 8:2.

[434] Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37; 11:37; John 13:12.

[435] Mark 4:38.

[436] Luke 22:41.

[437] Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35.

[438] Matt. 14:19; 15:36; 26:26, and the parallel passages in St. Mark and St. Luke; see also Luke 24:30.

[439] Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17.

[440] Matt. 19:13, 15; Mark 10:16; Luke 18:15.

[441] Luke 24:50.

[442] Matt. 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13, He stretches forth His hand and touches the leper. Matt. 8:15; Mark 1:31, He takes St. Peter's mother-in-law by the hand. Matt. 9:29, He touches the eyes of the two blind men before restoring their sight. Mark 7:33, on another day He touches the tongue and the ears of a deaf-mute before restoring his speech and hearing. Luke 22:51, He touches Malchus' ear. John 9:6, He covers the eyes of the man born blind with a little mud. See also Mark 8:23; Luke 4:40, etc.

[443] Matt. 9:25; Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54, Jesus takes the hand of Jairus' daughter and gently raises her up. Luke 7:14, He touches the bier upon which is the body of the son of the widow of Naim and stops those carrying it.

driving the sellers from the Temple and upsetting the tables of the money-changers,[444] humbly washing the feet of the Apostles.[445] None of these little details can leave us indifferent, for they all contribute in their *ensemble* to give us a more complete idea of our Lord's human nature. Sometimes it is His whole body we see moving, as when He stoops and takes hold of St. Peter sinking in the angry waters of the lake,[446] or when He places a little child at His side and embraces it fondly [447] in order to give a lesson to the Twelve, or when He stoops and writes on the ground with His finger in front of those who are accusing the woman taken in adultery,[448] or when He sharply turns His back on someone speaking to Him, to show His displeasure,[449] or when He turns toward His hearers to give more weight to His words.[450] Certainly the most impressive of all His gestures is that which He makes on the cross, when He inclines His head at the moment of breathing His last.[451]

The Evangelists, particularly St. Mark, delight in mentioning certain characteristic movements of the Savior's eyes, which outwardly translate and in a way emphasize His inner feelings. For this purpose they use forceful and picturesque expressions. When Christ first meets Simon, the future St. Peter, He looks him full in the face,[452] as if to fathom the very depths of his soul. It is another penetrating but sorrowful look which the Divine Master, in the courtyard of Caiphas' palace, turns upon the unhappy Apostle who has just denied

[444] Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:15.
[445] John 13:5.
[446] Matt. 14:31.
[447] Matt. 18:2; Mark 9:35; Luke 9:47; cfr. Luke 9:46.
[448] John 8:8.
[449] Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33; cfr. Luke 9:55.
[450] Luke 7:9; 10:23; 14:25; 23:28; see also Matt. 9:22; Luke 7:44; John 1:38.
[451] John 19:30.
[452] John 1:42: ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ; Vulg., *intuitus eum.*

Him.[453] Christ also turned the same intense look and one of particular fondness [454] upon the rich and noble young man, whom He desired to attach to His person, but who refused that signal honor. Before beginning the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus let His eyes sweep over His vast audience,[455] as orators usually do when beginning to speak. He likes thus to look upon His Apostles and disciples.[456] Those eyes, whose habitual gentleness we can easily imagine, could also flash with terrible gleams of holy anger.[457] Happy was Zacheus, to whom they were raised kindly as he sat in the sycamore tree.[458] St. Mark shows us Christ looking with mercy upon the woman with a flow of blood, who had, so to speak, just stolen a miracle from Him;[459] watching with mingled sorrow and admiration the rich who with great ostentation cast their alms into the poor-boxes in the Temple courts, and the poor widow who timidly dropped in her farthing;[460] gazing in silent indignation, on the evening of His triumphal entry, upon the abuses that had been introduced in those same courts.[461] How beautiful must have been the Savior's eyes when He raised them toward heaven before starting to pray, to enter into closer communication with God![462]

The prophet Isaias by anticipation gives us a description, though purely negative, of Christ's voice. It is a famous prophecy: "Behold my servant, I will uphold him, my elect . . . he shall not cry, nor have respect to person, neither shall his voice be heard abroad."[463] His voice was habitually mild

[453] Luke 22:61: *ἐνέβλεψεν*, Vulg., *respexit.*
[454] Mark 10:21: *ἐμβλέψας*, Vulg., *intuitus.*
[455] Luke 6:20.
[456] Matt. 19:26; Mark 3:34; 8:33; 10:27; Luke 6:20.
[457] Mark 3:5.
[458] Luke 19:5.
[459] Mark 5:32.
[460] Mark 12:41 f.
[461] Mark 11:11.
[462] Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; 7:34; John 11:41; 17:1.
[463] Is. 42:1–3; cfr. Matt. 12:16–19.

and gentle like Himself, although it could, on occasion, become loud enough for large gatherings to hear and understand the Master's words.[464] How we would like to have heard it when it proclaimed the "beatitudes" of the Kingdom of Heaven,[465] or when it uttered that sublime invitation: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you," [466] the farewell address [467] and the sacerdotal prayer! [468] As an obedient and harmonious instrument, it could adapt itself to the most varied situations and reproduce all the impressions of the Savior's soul. It became firm and stern when Jesus was constrained to utter a reproach [469] or to issue a peremptory command; [470] it was terrible when uttering denunciations [471] or pronouncing sentence of condemnation; [472] in other circumstances it was ironical and scornful,[473] authoritative,[474] joyous [475] or sad,[476] infinitely tender.[477] It lent itself to every accent.

But our piety would not be satisfied even if we could hear the Savior's kindly voice. Rather would it be His genuine features that we would delight in beholding. At least we would be happy to be able to form an exact idea of His whole appearance, especially His face. But we must forego this joy here below. Only in Heaven will it be granted us to see Christ face to face and to know His sacred features, forever transfigured.

[464] Matt. 5:1 f.; Mark 4:1 f., etc.
[465] Matt. 5:3–12.
[466] Matt. 11:28–30.
[467] John chaps. 13–16.
[468] John chap. 17.
[469] Matt. 4:4, 6, 10; 16:1–4, 23.
[470] Mark 1:25, 43; 4:39.
[471] Matt. chap. 23.
[472] Matt. 25:41.
[473] Matt. 4:4–10; 21:27; Mark 3:17; Luke 13:15 f., 32.
[474] Matt. 21:19; Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 11:43.
[475] Matt. 8:10 f.; Mark 10:29–31.
[476] Matt. 11:20; Mark 10:23–25; John 13:27.
[477] Matt. 25:34–40; John 19:26 f.

Meanwhile it is impossible to picture to ourselves what they were during His mortal life, for neither the Gospels nor other New Testament books nor the earliest ecclesiastical writers have left us any certain information about it.

Evidently the Apostles and the first Christian preachers must have gratified their hearers' legitimate curiosity on this point. But, as it was a purely secondary question, it soon ceased to be a matter of concern. In short, it does not appear that the primitive Church possessed a genuine portrait of Christ. This conclusion follows, first, from the astonishing diversity of opinions that existed among the most renowned doctors of the early centuries on the general question of Christ's personal appearance. For a rather long time the predominant opinion was that His face was uncomely, small, and without distinction. This view was based on the description which Isaias gives of the suffering, humiliated Messias,[478] and which, in consequence of an exaggerated interpretation, was applied literally to Christ. Certain details were insisted on: "So shall his visage be inglorious among men, and his form among the sons of men. . . . There is no beauty in him nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him: despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden." [479] St. Justin,[480] Clement of Alexandria,[481] Tertullian,[482] and later St. Basil and St. Cyril of Alexandria adopted this strange idea, from which the pagan Celsus drew the conclusion that Christ could not have been true God.[483] But happily this opin-

[478] Is. 52 : 13–53 : 12.

[479] Is. 52 : 14; 53 : 2 f.

[480] *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 14, 16, 66, 86. He says that Christ was ἀειδής, ἄτιμος, ἄδοξος.

[481] *Strom.*, II, 5; III, 17; VI, 17; *Paedag.*, III, i, 3. According to him, Christ was ὄψιν αἰσχρος, "of an ugly face."

[482] *De Carne Christi*, 3: *"Nec humanae honestatis corpus fuit, nedum caelestis claritatis."—Adv. Iudaeos*, 14: *"Ne aspectu quidem honestus."*

[483] Cfr. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VI, 75.

ion changed and the contrary became established little by little, favored perhaps by the esthetic tastes of the Greeks, who became Christians in large numbers, and still more by the consideration that, as Christ was the perfect, the ideal man, it was more in conformity with truth to conceive Him, even outwardly, as endowed with grace and beauty. In contrast to Isaias' *"Christus patiens"* they set up David's Messias, of whom it is written [484] that He is "beautiful above the sons of men." [485] This latter opinion very quickly became almost universal. It is the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas,[486] and most of the great theologians [487] justly hold that it would be hard to believe that a soul in which all was perfect and wonderfully balanced, was encased in an imperfect body. Moreover, they say, an ugly and repulsive face might have harmed the Savior's ministry by inviting contempt. Furthermore, the Gospels favor this hypothesis: although, as they show on every page, the charm which Our Lord exercised over thousands of persons of different classes, came chiefly from His goodness and holiness, from His preaching and miracles, it cannot be denied that His distinguished bearing and personal beauty likewise had a share in it.[488]

Of course, in the case of Christ, when speaking of beauty, we do not mean that soft, effeminate beauty which so many painters have attributed to Him, but a virile and, so to speak, spiritual beauty, befitting His moral qualities. Hence one is

[484] Ps. 44:3.

[485] See St. Jerome, *Comment. in Matth.*, 9:9; St. Augustine, *De Trinit.*, VIII, 4; St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth.*, XVIII: "The very look of Christ was full of admirable graciousness."

[486] *Summa Theol.*, 3a, qu. 46, art. 46 and 54; cfr. *Comment. in Ps.*, 44, where he says: *"Illam pulchritudinem habuit summe, quae pertinebat ad statum et reverentiam et gratiositatem in aspectu; ita quoddam divinum radiabat in vultu eius."*

[487] *E. g.*, Suarez, *De Incarnat.*, quaest. 14, art. 4, disput. 32, sec. 2. According to Legrand (*De Incarnat.*, dissert. 9), Christ was neither beautiful nor ugly. Thomassin (*De Incarnat.*, IV, 7) favors the theory that He was ugly.

[488] See Landriot, *Le Christ de la Tradition*, 2d ed., II, 291–294.

fond of picturing Him with noble, distinguished features, imposing and intelligent, kindly and gracious, arousing both respect and affection, drawing hearts gently, religiously. The splendor of His soul and, to a certain extent, the splendor of divinity, were reflected in His face.

In the absence of precise information, we can add nothing more. Constantia, sister of Constantine the Great, wrote to Eusebius of Caesarea, asking his opinion on this interesting point. The learned bishop, who was deeply versed in the smallest details of church history, replied [489] that there were two natures in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human; that God alone knows exactly in what the former consists; that, as for what concerns the latter, and in particular the portrait of Jesus, we must be satisfied to say, with St. Paul,[490] that we no longer know Christ according to the flesh. St. Augustine [491] uses similar expressions. Added to the remarkable divergence of views which we have just pointed out, this testimony of two early Christian doctors, among the most renowned for knowledge, shows that the early Church was unacquainted with any genuine portrait of Our Lord.

As early as the first century, and even more so in the second, the Savior's appearance was depicted under the most varied forms in the Catacombs. We also know that the Gnostics, especially the followers of Basilides and Carpocrates, had portraits of Christ, which they venerated after their own fashion.[492] But St. Augustine's remark applies to these painted or carved images: *"De ipsius Dominicae facie carnis innumerabilium cogitationum diversitate variatur et fingitur."* [493] They were simply works of the imagination. Each artist exe-

[489] The letter was inserted in the *Acta* (art. 16) of the Second Council of Nicaea, held in 787.

[490] 2 Cor. 5 : 16.

[491] *De Trinit.*, VIII, 4.

[492] See St. Irenaeus, *Ad. Haer.*, I, xxiv, 5; *Philosophoumena,* VII, 35.

[493] *Loc. cit.*

cuted them after the idea which he had formed of Christ, without in the least claiming to reproduce His veritable features. Later, legend seized upon this subject, as upon so many others, and cited portraits of Christ, some miraculous,[494] others painted by St. Luke,[495] none of which, however, goes back to a very early date.

Still later were published descriptions of Our Lord's appearance. Of these the principal ones are three: that which St. John Damascene, in the eighth century, inserted in a letter to the Emperor Theophilus;[496] that of a certain Publius Lentulus, who pretends to be the predecessor of Pontius Pilate in Palestine, sketched in a so-called official letter sent by him to the Roman Senate;[497] and that attributed to Nicephorus Callisti,[498] a Greek historian of the fourteenth century. There exists a certain resemblance between these portraits, which renders it probable that they have a common source. The second is the most complete and the best known, but it is not believed to have existed before the twelfth century. According to the text that seems to us the best accredited, it reads as follows: "He was a man of a tall, distinguished figure, with venerable features. Whoever looks at Him may both love and fear Him. His hair is curly and frizzly, glossy and of dark color, falling over His shoulders, parted in the middle after the manner of the Nazarenes.[499] His forehead is prominent and very serene; His face, without wrinkle or blemish, is gracious and of a slightly dark pinkish hue. His

[494] Notably that which Our Lord is said to have sent to King Abgar of Edessa; that which He is said to have imprinted on Veronica's veil on His way to Calvary; and that which He left impressed on the holy shroud after His death.

[495] Reproductions of it are common.

[496] *Epist. ad Theophil.*, 3–4.

[497] See Fabricius, *Codex Apocryph. Novi Testamenti*, I, 301–310.

[498] *Hist.*, I, 40; cfr. II, 7, 43; VI, 15.

[499] Or rather, of the "Nazirenes," *i. e.*, those who had taken the "Nazirate" vow.

nose and mouth are regular in shape. His beard is flowing and divided in two. His eyes are grey-blue and clear. When He reprimands, He is terrible; when He admonishes, He is mild and kindly, merry without losing His gravity. He was never seen to laugh, but often was He seen to weep. He stands very straight.[500] His hands and arms are pleasing to the sight. He speaks but little and very modestly. He is the most beautiful of the children of men."

In this sketch, though some traits,—for example, the long flowing hair,—are false, the picture as a whole is not unworthy of Our Lord, and well sets forth the general type which has been followed for centuries and reproduced by the brush or chisel of many great artists.[501]

II. The Human Soul of Christ

To His body, from the first moment when it was formed by the Holy Ghost, there was joined a soul like to ours, but of a perfection that we can hardly conceive. It is referred to in several Gospel passages. Sometimes the Divine Master Himself or the sacred writers mention it directly; for example, when He says: "Now is my soul troubled";[502] "The Son of man is come . . . to give his life a redemption for

[500] According to another reading, His head was usually bent forward.

[501] On the features of Christ, see Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes,* 2d ed., pp. 386–388; F. X. Kraus, *Real-Encyklopädie der christlichen Alterthümer,* II, 7–28; Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels,* I, 308–316; Glückselig, *Studien über Jesus Christus und sein wahres Ebenbild,* 1863; Eh. Marianus, *Jesus und Maria in ihrer äussern Gestalt und Schönheit,* 1870; Dobschütz, *Christusbilder,* in Harnack and Gebhardt's *Texte und Untersuchungen,* XVIII, pp. 1–2; G. A. Müller, *Die leibliche Gestalt Jesu Christi,* 1909. The Rationalist theologians K. Hase (*Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., pp. 321–303) and Th. Keim (*Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 459–464) treat this subject in a respectful and interesting manner. See also Farrar, *The Life of Christ in Art,* 1894, and J. L. French, *Christ in Sacred Art,* 1900. Some original details may be found in the small work of Delitzsch, *Sehet welch' ein Mensch, ein Christusbild,* 1872.

[502] John 12:27; ἡ ψυχή μου.

many";[503] "My soul is sorrowful even unto death";[504] "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit";[505] or when the Evangelists relate that He knew "in his spirit" the secret thoughts of His enemies,[506] that He sighed "in spirit,"[507] that He groaned "in the spirit" and was troubled "in spirit,"[508] that He "yielded up the ghost."[509] More often this holy soul appears to us only indirectly. If we know nothing for certain about Christ's outward appearance, we can, thanks to the Gospels, form a pretty accurate notion of His intellectual and moral features. Not that they give us a real description of those features, but by grouping the numerous though scattered traits which they cite here and there, and by drawing from Our Lord's acts and words conclusions perfectly justified by logical inference, we succeed, without forcing the sense and without very great labor, in picturing that soul to ourselves in its majestic splendor and in penetrating into the inner sanctuary of its feelings, affections, and motives.

Before seeking the elements of this psychological analysis in the Gospels, let us cast a general glance at the perfection of the Savior's soul. If we have a right to say that Christ's body was endowed with exceptional qualities, as befitted the divine mode of its formation, with the more reason may we say as much of His soul, which, while remaining simply human, presented to Heaven and earth a union of the rarest perfection. We must be content with a few brief indications, hoping that our modest sketch may open new vistas for the reader.[510]

[503] Matt. 20:28. Soul is here equivalent to life.
[504] Matt. 26:38.
[505] Luke 23:46: τὸ πνεῦμά μου.
[506] Mark 2:8.
[507] Mark 8:12.
[508] John 11:33; 13:21.
[509] Matt. 27:50; John 19:30.
[510] See the great theologians, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, Suarez, Legrand, etc., in their treatise, *De Incarnatione*. Several Anglican authors have recently

In Christ, the new Adam and head of regenerated humanity, the perfection of the interior life, and of the moral and spiritual life, was raised to heights which were never before and never again will be attained. Thus did He have a right to say to His followers of all time: "Follow me, imitate me!" And so St. Paul, who penetrated so deeply into the soul of the Incarnate Word, could give all Christians without exception this urgent advice: *"Hoc sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Jesu."* [511] "All perfections of soul, mind, heart, and character met together in that rich nature," which is truly "God's masterpiece in the order of creation and of the supernatural world." [512] Hence Origen, in a spirit of deep admiration, wrote that Jesus possessed "a blessed and most excellent soul," [513] in which all human faculties were developed to an unparalleled degree and in perfect poise. It was a divinely harmonious assemblage, wonderfully complete, in which it would have been impossible to discover the slightest imperfection or, *a fortiori,* the least stain. In the case of the best men, and even the greatest saints, there exist moral weaknesses along with the most excellent qualities. In one case it may be emotions that dominate at the expense of the will; or again, vigor and readiness of mind may be accompanied by lack of feeling, or even by harshness. In every case there is something wanting. Christ's soul alone had neither defect nor blemish nor inferiority of any kind, but in it there reigned a harmony of all the virtues of the ideal man.

Although philosophers to-day distinguish only two chief

written works on our Lord's soul and character that contain delicate and judicious observations, though not always without some admixture of error. We draw particular attention to Adamson, *Studies of the Mind in Christ,* 1898; Bernard, *Mental Characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ,* 1899; Th. Robinson, *Studies in the Character of Christ, an Argument for the Truth of Christianity,* 1900. See also J. Ninck, *Jesus als Charakter,* 1906.

[511] Phil. 2:5; cfr. Heb. 12:2 f.

[512] Landriot, *Le Christ de la Tradition,* 2d ed., II, 502.

[513] *In Epist. ad Rom.,* l. III.

faculties in the soul, intellect and will, for the sake of clearness we will group under four distinct heads what we have to say about the Savior's soul, taking up in turn His sensibility, His intellect, His moral qualities, and His will.

1. *The Sensibility of the Soul of Christ*

We have said that the body of Our Blessed Redeemer possessed an extraordinary delicacy which rendered it extremely sensitive to suffering. His soul was no less delicate, no less impressionable. A perusal of the Gospel narratives shows us that He experienced most of our emotions, whether joyful or sad, pleasant or painful, especially the sorrowful emotions. Yet, whatever happened, His soul was always immersed in tranquillity and holy joy. The peace that He so often wished His Apostles,[514] He possessed to the fullest measure. If the Evangelists at times mention some distress that He felt, we see that He is ever complete master of His impressions.[515] Under particular circumstances, St. John states this fact by means of a very characteristic expression: "Jesus . . . troubled himself." [516] Nowhere do we come upon the least exaltation of sensibility. Without difficulty He controls it immediately,[517] for it was virile and well ordered, like His whole being. From the double viewpoint of nature and effects, His emotions, His "passions," as the theologians say, were always noble and holy.

A wonderful calmness was one of His most striking qualities.[518] Being sure of Himself and His mission, He never

[514] Luke 24:36; John 14:27; 20:19, 21, 26.

[515] Such was the case at Gethsemani, where, however, the God-Man's emotions were so violent. Cfr. Matt. 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46.

[516] John 11:33.

[517] John 12:27 f.

[518] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 15, notes it.

manifests the least doubt, the least embarrassment. He goes right ahead, straight to His purpose, without hesitating, because He knows the designs of His heavenly Father, who marked out His path. Nor do we ever find in Him any exaggerated eagerness or haste or impatient uneasiness; His calmness is constant. Though He was harassed by cruel enemies, who spied on Him, who sprang up at every step on His path, who accused Him, who sought to encompass His ruin by all means in their power, His serenity was not shaken for a single instant. *"Dulcis anima, in pace":* this inscription from the Catacombs fits Him wonderfully well, so complete and perpetual was His self-possession.

Let us but recall the storm on the Lake of Genesareth. Its violence made the Apostles tremble, though many of them were fishermen by profession and had again and again experienced the fury of the sea. While the tempest roars, Jesus sleeps peacefully in the stern of the little boat, which is tossed to and fro by the waves. When startled out of His sleep by His disciples, He rises without haste, gently reproaches them for their lack of calmness; then, with a truly divine majesty, He puts an end to the frightful storm. What a contrast![519] Neither the devils interrupting His discourses [520] nor His adversaries grossly insulting Him [521] and even going so far as to lay brutal hands upon Him,[522] succeed in making Him emerge from His calm. If it happens that He disappears for a time, because He has not the right to advance the hour fixed for His sacrifice, He does so without fear and in perfect peace.[523] No one could make Him lose His composure. Whatever peril threatens Him, whatever fright His

[519] Matt. 8:24–26; Mark 4:37–39; Luke 8:23–25.
[520] Mark 1:22–26; Luke 4:33–35, etc.
[521] Matt. 9:3; Luke 7:49; 11:45; 13:14; John 7:20, etc.
[522] Luke 4:28–30; John 7:30; 8:59, etc.
[523] Matt. 15:21; Mark 7:24; John 7:1, etc.

disciples feel, He performs the duty of the moment in perfect tranquillity.[524] Painful, disturbing, dangerous incidents filled His public life; yet it passed like a peaceful river gently flowing between its banks, never overflowing, and going on till it quietly empties into the ocean.[525] Outside influences never succeeded in producing in that superior soul any agitation that even remotely resembled disorder or imperfection.

Nevertheless, to a certain extent Jesus was acquainted with violent and painful emotions. St. Mark alone of the Evangelists attributes to Him in express terms a feeling of holy wrath.[526] In several other passages, however, we see Our Lord yielding His soul to veritable indignation, under the impulse of which He utters vehement words or terrible menaces,[527] and even proceeding to acts of overt repression.[528] This wrath and this indignation were the result of His earnest zeal for God's glory, of the hatred He bore toward sin and hypocrisy and even toward simple imperfections, when He saw them

[524] Luke 13:32; John 11:7–10.

[525] "Popular ovations no more upset His calm than does the ingratitude of men. Not that He does not feel them both, . . . but His fine soul soars above . . . At His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He has the same self-control as before the courts, and the Hosanna to the Son of David disturbs His serenity no more than the tumultuous cries of the crowd at the pretorium." (Landriot, *Le Christ de la Tradition*, 2d ed., II, 348 f.). But we cannot say all that might be said; there are numerous other instances that might be cited; for example, the Savior's reply to the threats of the tetrarch Herod Antipas (Luke 13:32 f.), His reply to the haughty Pilate (John 19:11), the unruffled calmness with which He advanced to meet His executioners (Matt. 26:45 f.), the peace in which He breathed His last, notwithstanding the bitterness which His soul experienced from the apparent abandonment in which His Father left Him (Matt. 27:45 f.; Luke 23:46), etc., etc.

[526] On the occasion of the odious conduct of the Pharisees, when they spied on the Divine Master in order to accuse Him, the Evangelist writes (Mark 3:5): *"Circumspiciens eos cum ira."*

[527] Matt. 9:30; 11:20–24; 16:23; 21:19; 23:1–39; Mark 1:25; 8:33; 9:24; 10:14; 11:14; Luke 4:35; 9:55; 11:39–52; 13:15. It has been said of the denunciation of the Pharisees and scribes (Matt. 23), that literature contains no example of more passionate invectives; but never was passion more legitimate.

[528] Matt. 21:12 f.; Mark 11:15 f.; Luke 19:45 f.; John 2:14–17. We refer to the two expulsions of the sellers who were profaning the Temple.

in His disciples, who were called to so high an estate. Furthermore, it is important to note that it was always freely that He let these emotions stir His soul for a few moments, and never in His own personal interest. Therefore they never moved Him unwillingly, as is often the case with us; they were constantly under His powerful control.

The Savior had also, especially at Gethsemani and Calvary, the painful experience of fear that weighs one down, of fright that grips the heart, of sadness and loathing that reaches to discouragement. What anguish in that plaint that came from His lips: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." [529] The sacred writers use forceful verbs to render these poignant emotions: *"Coepit contristari et maestus esse"*; [530] *Coepit pavere et taedere"*; [531] *"Factus in agonia."* [532] And a short time before expiring, the august Victim uttered a cry of distress that marked so horrible a suffering: *"Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani*—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [532a]

Our Lord has sometimes been regarded as a melancholy man, with a perpetually gloomy face. This view has no foundation in fact. It is true, as we have just observed, that He had His hours of profound sorrow, and His soul must often have been weighed down by the view He constantly had before His eyes of so much ingratitude and hard-heartedness, first of all on the part of His own people, then in the entire world, so much unsteadiness among His most devoted friends. But we must not forget that His soul, hypostatically united to the Divinity habitually possessed the fullness of beatitude. Perhaps it is difficult for us to picture Him bursting into peals of laughter, manifesting a noisy joy; but we may suppose

[529] Matt. 26:38.
[530] Matt. 26:37.
[531] Mark 14:33.
[532] Luke 22:43.
[532a] Matt. 27:46.

that a heavenly smile often lighted up His countenance. The beauties of animate and inanimate nature,—flowers, children, pure souls, and, on a higher plane, the delights of friendship, the certainty of eternal happiness that He brought to so many souls,—were sources of sweet holy joy. Did He not say that it was not fitting for His disciples to fast and be sad so long as He was with them? Such words do not denote a sombre, melancholy nature.[533] Furthermore, St. Luke expressly relates [534] that, when the seventy-two disciples whom Jesus had sent out to announce the glad tidings, returned to Him and reported the success of their preaching, His soul overflowed with holy gladness. And what deep joy in those words which enable us to read in the Savior's soul the brightest hopes of the future: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." [535]

After what has been said about the infused knowledge of the Incarnate Word, one would hardly expect to meet among His emotions, that of wonder or astonishment. In fact, the *nil mirari* is a rule of divine perfection. And yet the Evangelists attest that He experienced it in two different circumstances: on the occasion of the centurion's admirable profession of faith [536] and the occasion of a no less remarkable demonstration of unbelief on the part of His fellow-citizens of Nazareth.[537] But Christ is a man as well as God, and His amazement is without prejudice to His infinite knowledge, as an astronomer gazes in admiration at a new star whose appearance he long since foresaw and announced.

[533] In the sermon on the Mount, Christ counsels Christians that, when they are going to fast, they should do so with a joyful countenance (Matt. 6:16–18). It amounts to the same thing.

[534] Luke 10:21.

[535] John 12:32.

[536] Matt. 8:10.

[537] Mark 6:6.

2. The Savior's Intellectual Physiognomy

Under this other aspect the human soul of the Word becomes still more attractive, and our analysis enables us to rise to loftier spheres. Still following the sacred writers, let us here contemplate new splendors. "I am the light of the world," said Our Lord.[538] St. John, recalling the wonders he had seen so close at hand, with a holy enthusiasm calls his Master "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." [539] The intellect of Jesus was the great beacon of that shining light with which He desired to illumine the whole earth. With that light, which He so much cherished, the Savior often contrasts darkness, in a literal sense and also in figure. He was unwilling to believe that anyone could prefer darkness to light.[540] "The light is not in him," [541] he sadly remarked, in reference to anyone walking in the night. When He was placed under arrest at Gethsemani, He called that iniquitous act a work done by the power of darkness, *i. e.*, Satan.[542]

We saw that Christ's intellectual faculties mysteriously and gradually developed during His childhood and youth. All the remainder of His life was marked with the stamp of the most open, the quickest, the most vigorous mind that can be conceived. No problem presented any difficulties for that mind. It saw the whole expanse of past, present, and future. St. Bernard [543] quite rightly lauded its power. We can also praise the perfect soundness of its judgment; the irreproachable appreciation of the true, the beautiful, and

[538] John 8: 12.
[539] John 1: 9.
[540] John 3: 19. Cf. Matt. 6: 22 f.
[541] John 11: 10.
[542] Luke 22: 53.
[543] *Hom. super Miss.*, II, 9.

the good; its lively but restrained imagination, so remarkably proven by Christ's words, especially His parables; its extraordinary penetration and what we might call its "spirit"; its wonderful gift of observation; its language, always perfectly adapted to its thought;[544] its memory, which never forgot anything it had seen and was always able to apply it fittingly.

Rationalists sometimes treat Christ as a "dreamer." A dreamer, never; quite the contrary, He was a very active and profound thinker, who had dwelt a long time in the company of His great ideas before uttering them in word and deed. But this Thinker did not live in a sort of confinement within the depths of His soul, shut off from the outer world. His eyes were wide open, taking in everything that went on about Him. Thus He was the closest and most careful of observers; of this we have proof in numerous instances mentioned by the Evangelists. We remarked some of them when making inquiry as to what might have been the chief factors of His experimental education; we could fill page after page with them.[545] In whatever place He was, He had but to cast one scrutinizing look about Him: nothing escaped Him; He even observed apparently insignificant details. He knows what occurs on the waters of the lake,[546] on the mountain,[547] in the country,[548] in cities,[549] in the houses of the rich,[550] and in

[544] Later on we shall have occasion to develop this special viewpoint.

[545] The critics who see in Christ only a remarkable man, insist on His gift of observation, at times in an interesting manner. Cfr. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 443 f., 450–452; P. W. Schmidt, *Die Geschichte Jesu erklärt,* pp. 53 f.; Bousset, *Jesus,* pp. 20 f.; Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* pp. 77–81; J. Crooker, *The Supremacy of Jesus,* pp. 98–105; O. Frommel, *Die Poesie des Evangeliums Jesu,* pp. 71–114.

[546] Matt. 13:47 f.

[547] Matt. 18:12.

[548] Matt. 13:1–9, 24–30; 25:1–12, etc.

[549] Matt. 24:45–51; 25:14–30; Luke 16:19–22.

[550] Matt. 22:1–13; Luke 14:16–24; 16:1–8, 19–22.

those of the poor,[551] and a hundred other like details. He observes that a householder with a thought to the future puts aside in his treasure *nova et vetera,*[552] that the haughty Pharisees seek the places of honor at feasts.[553] Independent of His divine knowledge, which enabled Him to read minds and hearts, He could, because of this gift of observation which we admire in Him, apply to each one the moral treatment that best fitted him. Thus it is that He gives three different answers to three disciples, either over-eager or over-hesitant, who sought His permission to attach themselves to His person.[554]

The Savior, therefore, had a concrete mind, we might almost say, he was a realist in the best sense of that term.[555] What living, charming pictures he draws in His wonderful parables! Often, in a few simple words, He portrays a whole scene. For example, when He says, with reference to John the Baptist: "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings." [556] It is also a picture in miniature that Christ sketches in this short verse: "Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you." [557] This is fine realism. But we must at once add that never did any idealist surpass Our Lord. He came to found the most ideal of kingdoms. From His humblest disciples He requires ideal virtues. Who

[551] Matt. 9:16; 13:33, etc.
[552] Matt. 13:52.
[553] Luke 14:7.
[554] Luke 9:57–62.
[555] Among other texts, see Matt. 19:10–12; Mark 7:18 f.; Luke 15:8 f.; 16:19–31. A hundred more might easily be cited.
[556] Matt. 11:7 f.
[557] Matt. 7:6.

has ever shown, as He did, that man lives not by material bread alone, and that the food of Christians must be chiefly spiritual? It was partly the concrete character of Christ's mind which helped to make His words habitually so clear and precise. Yet it was a simple matter for Him to rise to the loftiest realms of thought, as is attested by His discourses in the Fourth Gospel, where He sets forth in noble language the most sublime truths of the new religion.

His imagination was not less remarkable than the exactness and vigor of His mind. This is why, in His teaching, He so often has recourse to figures of speech, and why these figures are always beautiful, true, and striking. They give His words an attractiveness, a savor which, humanly speaking, had a notable share in the success of His preaching. At times these images present themselves spontaneously to His mind; again He derives them from the recollection of what He has seen and heard. It may be the rapid and mysterious movement of the wind,[558] a living fountain,[559] a glass of cool water,[560] a husbandman driving a plow,[561] or a strong armed man guarding the house,[562] servants waiting for their master's return late at night,[563] a wicked rich man clothed in purple and fine linen,[564] a wedding garment,[565] a blind man leading another blind man,[566] fishers of men,[567] the magnificent description of the end of the world,[568] hypocrites compared to whitened sepulchers,[569] a faith that can move moun-

[558] John 3:8.
[559] John 4:10.
[560] Matt. 10:42.
[561] Luke 9:62.
[562] Luke 11:21.
[563] Luke 12:35 f.
[564] Luke 16:19.
[565] Matt. 22:11.
[566] Luke 6:39.
[567] Mark 1:17.
[568] Matt. chaps. 24–25.
[569] Matt. 23:27.

tains,[570] Christians compared to men who carry their cross in the footsteps of the crucified Savior.[571] The simplest details may thus be found beside the sublimest features, mutually setting off one another to greater advantage. What a rich and practical imagination all this shows! It appears even in the colorful and appropriate surnames that Christ gives to some of His disciples: Cephas, or rather Kefa, "Peter"; Boanerges, "Son of Thunder," etc.

His counsels, His rejoinders, His reproaches, are always eminently pertinent and bear the stamp of wisdom and intelligence. His life as a missionary, bringing Him into varied situations, put Him in touch with all classes of Jewish and foreign society, so that He had often to answer most unexpected, delicate, and perplexing questions. Yet He always emerged with a cleverness that even His enemies admired [572] and that delighted the crowds.[573] When John the Baptist hesitated to baptize Him, Jesus merely said: "So it becometh us to fulfil all justice," [574] and the hesitation ceased. Three times in succession He silenced the demon that tempted Him by replies taken from Holy Scripture.[575] When the Pharisees, in a spirit of animosity, asked the first disciples why they took so little pains in the matter of the traditions regarding things pure and impure, the Divine Master reduced them to silence by irresistible arguments.[576] And in like manner, on a score of other occasions His words, now dignified and firm, now ironical, again gentle and calm, addressed to enemies or friends, never failed to produce the most striking results.[577]

[570] Luke 17:6.
[571] Matt. 10:38.
[572] Cfr. Luke 20:26, etc.
[573] Matt. 22:46; Mark 12:37, etc.
[574] Matt. 3:15.
[575] Matt. 4:4, 7, 10.
[576] Matt. 15:3–11; Mark 7:1–13.
[577] Cfr. Matt. 16:2–4; 21:16, 24; 22:15–21, 29–32; 26:64; Mark 2:8–11;

From all these reflections it follows that the Savior possessed in the highest degree of perfection, mental faculties like ours, subject to the same general laws as ours, and which were used by Him as precious and ready instruments in the accomplishment of His mission.[578]

3. Christ's Moral Character

We should have to exhaust the entire list of virtues and cite most of the Gospel contents if we were to take up one by one all our Savior's moral qualities. Our undertaking is much less pretentious. We purpose simply to glance over those moral qualities that were the most characteristic in Him and to mention some of them according to the evidence of the Gospels. An eminent Protestant historian of the last century says of Christ: "There has been nothing on this earth more innocent, more powerful, more sublime, and more holy than His conduct, His life, and His death . . . The breath of God Himself enters into His every word";[579] and also, we may add, into his every deed. Considered from a moral viewpoint, Our Lord is incomparably the most perfect man that ever lived. Never did our poor earth possess so ideal a model of all virtues, so surpassing a type of holiness.

It is His *absolute holiness* that we must mention first. An attentive reading of the Gospels fails to reveal the least in-

6:4; 10:42–45; Luke 10:41 f.; John 18:33–37; 19:11. These are merely a few examples taken almost at haphazard.

[578] The following excerpt from Th. Keim (*Geschichte Jesu,* I, 459) shows into what remarkable details the critics sometimes go in the matter of Christ's human faculties, which in their view are the only ones He ever possessed: "It is quite possible to speak of His talent for eloquence and poetry. We may consider that He might have become a philosopher, . . . perhaps even a great statesman or an artist; but not a warrior." Then, a few lines further on: "In poetic elevation He did not reach the sublimity of Isaias; in wisdom, He did not equal Aristotle or Plato, not even Philo." These last appreciations do but little honor to Keim's judgment.

[579] Leopold von Ranke, quoted by Ninck, *Jesus als Charakter,* p. 7.

dication that would permit us to suppose the existence of any imperfection in Him. The sacred writers constantly present Him as a being thrice holy. By a signal privilege, the Mother of Christ had been an exception to the fatal law of forfeiture which attaints all men by the very fact of their birth; but Christ's personal holiness was incomparably greater. *"Quod nascetur ex te sanctum,"* said the angel to the Blessed Virgin.[580] From the first moment of His conception He was "the holy being" *par excellence.* He is the perfect type of holiness. We hear Him publicly, in the face of His rabid enemies, lay claim to this universal, absolute holiness in words of lofty and solemn defiance: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" [581] None of them dared to accept the challenge. Furthermore, when they condemned Him, they were unable, despite the false witnesses they had suborned, to find any genuine indictment against Him. They were consequently driven to base their death sentence on the fact that He had given Himself out to be the promised Messias.[582] Pilate, too,[583] and Judas [584] proclaimed His innocence aloud. "Who did no sin," St. Peter wrote,[585] and St. Paul used similar words [586] when declaring that Christ experienced all human infirmities, sin alone excepted. This evidence is eloquent and decisive.

In the train of our earliest doctors [587] we may do well to mention also Our Lord's *ineffable virginity.*[588] As St. Jerome said, He was "a Virgin, born of a virgin"; and he adds

[580] Luke 1:35.
[581] John 8:46.
[582] Matt. 26:60–66.
[583] Matt. 27:24.
[584] Matt. 27:4.
[585] 1 Pet. 2:22.
[586] Heb. 4:15.
[587] See St. Justin, *De Resurrect. Carnis,* 3; Tertullian, *De Monog.;* Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.,* VI, 49; Origen, *Comment. in Matth.,* X, 17, and *in Lev.,* IX, 12; Pseudo-Clement, I, 6.
[588] See also St. Augustine, *Tractat. in Ioan.,* CXXIV, 8.

that, if Jesus favored the Apostle John with an especially close friendship, it was partly because the beloved disciple had remained virginal.[589] Though forcefully defending the holiness of marriage as no one before Him had ever done, He raised aloft the standard of virginity,[590] under which so many pure souls have since ranged themselves out of love for Him, in order to be here below "as the angels," as the blessed in Heaven.[591]

At the basis of Christian virtues, the Divine Master placed the *spirit of renunciation and sacrifice,* which He Himself practiced without stint, as St. Paul expressively says: *"Christus non sibi placuit."* [592] All that ordinary men seek with such avidity, often to the detriment of their eternal salvation,—glory, wealth, ease, earthly happiness,—Christ generously sacrificed without regret. In vain did Satan present to Him the ideal of personal gratification under various seductive forms. The threefold temptation He scornfully cast far from Him. Never did He seek any enjoyment but that of duty, exactly and lovingly performed. The path which He ceased not to follow for a single moment was that of detachment, the rough and narrow path that led to Calvary. He Himself first practiced what He counseled His disciples, saying: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." [593]

The life of poverty that we saw Him leading with His mother and foster-father at Nazareth bears witness to His spirit of self-denial. He lived in even greater poverty after entering upon His office of preacher. Notwithstanding the devotedness of the holy women of Galilee, who helped to meet

[589] *Contr. Iovin.,* I, 26.
[590] Matt. 19: 10–12.
[591] Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:36.
[592] Rom. 15:3.
[593] Mark 8:34; cfr. Matt. 10:34–38; Luke 9:55–62; 14:26 f.; 18:22, 28 f., etc.

part of His material needs and those of His Apostles,[594] He was more than once without the necessaries of life; one day, all that the Twelve had to satisfy their hunger was a few ears of grain picked in the fields as they passed through.[595] Jesus possessed as His own only the humble garments which He wore, and these the Roman executioners divided among themselves in His very presence even before He had drawn His last breath. His body was laid away in a borrowed tomb.

Many of His sayings reveal how greatly he cherished poverty. The first of the Beatitudes[596] is a hearty felicitation addressed to the poor. His beautiful prayer, that has been given the name of the Lord's Prayer, mentions worldly goods only in passing,[597] and that under the humblest form, since it asks only for daily bread. On a different occasion He pities the rich because of the many perils which they encounter for their eternal salvation.[598] Love of wealth is, He says, a pagan vice.[599] Three of His finest parables,—of the wicked rich man,[600] of the unfaithful steward,[601] and of the rich landowner whose barns could not hold all his crops,[602]—emphasize the moral danger that arises from the possession of wealth.

However, though living in a manner so detached, so self-denying, so poor, the Savior did not deem it necessary or useful to follow His precursor, and even a certain number of His countrymen in the way of exceptional austerity. It is interesting to study His attitude towards *asceticism*. The Mosaic law at first imposed on the Hebrews only a single

[594] Luke 8:2 f.; 23:49, 55 f.
[595] Matt. 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1.
[596] Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20.
[597] Matt. 6:11.
[598] Matt. 19:23–26; Mark 10:23–27; Luke 6:24; 16:9–13; 18:24–27, etc.
[599] Matt. 6:32.
[600] Luke 16:19–31.
[601] Luke 16:1–13.
[602] Luke 12:16–21.

fast once a year, that of the Feast of the Expiation.[603] After the Exile, the religious authorities established four others to perpetuate the memory of the great trials of the theocratic nation. In the Savior's time, persons aspiring to a more than ordinary piety fasted rather frequently.[604] Far from prescribing these supererogatory fasts, Christ explicitly exempted His disciples from them,[605] and probably He did not practice them Himself. Furthermore, at times He accepted invitations to dinner at the homes of rich people,[606] whether publicans [607] or Pharisees.[608] His enemies took advantage of this to make against Him the ridiculous charge of being "a glutton and a wine drinker." [609] Once He even took part in a wedding feast.[610] On two different occasions [611] He allowed precious perfumes to be poured upon Him. This is explained by His religious plan. He had no intention of imposing great austerities as a general rule for the mass of Christians. And besides, He left to His Apostles and their successors the care of organizing the life of the Church in these matters after His Ascension.[612] As to Himself, especially during the years of His ministry, which was inaugurated by a forty days' fast, He recoiled before no privation and no fatigue, but expended His strength without measure, often depriving Himself of sleep,[613] and, before allowing Himself to be fastened to the cross, declined the narcotic drink that would have lightened His horrible sufferings.[614]

[603] Its technical name is *Yom Kippur,* Day of the Pardon.
[604] Matt. 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 2:37; 5:33; 18:12.
[605] Matt. 9:15–17; Mark 2:19–22; Luke 5:34–39.
[606] Matt. 26:6; Mark 14:3; Luke 10:38–42; John 12:2.
[607] Matt. 9:10 f.; Mark 2:15 f.; Luke 5:29 f.
[608] Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1, etc.
[609] Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34.
[610] John 2:1–10.
[611] Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3; Luke 7:37 f.; John 12:3.
[612] This is the force of the words *postea ieiunabunt,* Matt. 9:15.
[613] Mark 6:45–51; Luke 6:12; 22:39; John 18:2.
[614] Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23.

Humility, that other fundamental virtue of Christianity, almost unknown among the haughty pagans, and rather moderately practiced in the Jewish world, is also to be reckoned among the qualities that shone most brightly in Our Lord. Long before preaching it, He honored it by His constant example. It showed forth from His very coming into this world: in the choice of His parents, in the place of His birth, in His flight to Egypt, in the small details of His hidden life. Was it possible even for a God made man to humble Himself, to empty Himself [615] further? In very truth He can call Himself "humble of heart." [616] Many times He reminded His Apostles that, although He was their Lord and Master, He had willed to make Himself their servant,[617] and on Holy Thursday evening He stooped to the point of washing their feet.[618] His Passion was a long, painful series of humiliations pushed to the extreme, which He underwent without complaint, though feeling them keenly.[619] He referred the praises addressed to Him to His Father.[620] His solemn entry into Jerusalem, triumphal as it was, yet had a stamp of humility,[621] and it was scarcely over when He modestly withdrew to Bethania.[622] So long as His hour was not yet come, He escaped from the ovations which the enthusiastic crowds prepared for Him.[623] How He loved humility and how He praised it! How He condemned pride! [624] How little He sought His own glory [625] and, on the contrary, how He welcomed the

[615] This is St. Paul's forceful expression, Phil. 2:7: ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν (Vulg., *semetipsum exinanivit*).

[616] Matt. 11:29.

[617] Matt. 10:24 f.; Luke 22:24–27; John 13:13 f., etc.

[618] John 13:1–11.

[619] Matt. 26:55; Mark 14:48; Luke 22:52.

[620] Matt. 19:16 f.; Mark 10:17 f.; Luke 18:18 f.

[621] Matt. 21:2–5.

[622] Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11.

[623] John 6:14 f.

[624] Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 18:1–4; 23:5–12; Luke 14:7–11; 18:9–14, etc.

[625] Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:8; John 8:50, etc.

deepest of all humiliations: the ingratitude of the masses, abandonment, for the time, by His dearest friends, the partial failure of His sacrifice, the triumph and scorn of His enemies! All this He suffered out of love for us, *confusione contempta,* as St. Paul expresses it.[626]

He held His human dignity very much at heart, and it was a special sort of trial for Him to see it violated and outraged by contemptible creatures. He was not insensible to a lack of courtesy,[627] and His heart expanded at an act of devotion.[628] How His feelings, then, must have suffered under the slaps in His face, the spitting upon Him, and the unjust accusations! At times He stoutly protested [629] or observed a majestic silence [630] or He astonished His judges by His attitude and the steadfastness of His replies.[631]

Obedience is on a par with humility, which itself is an integral part of the spirit of sacrifice. We are not, then, surprised to find in Christ the most perfect example of obedience. But it will be more in place for us to treat of this virtue when we come to consider His will. Yet it is fitting here that we say a few words about His *patience,* which was subjected to such rude and constant trial from the beginning of His public life up to His last breath. Patience, however, is the virtue of the strong, who have learned to subdue their own nature and courageously to support the hardships of life, physical suffering, adversity, injustice, and insult. Christ possessed this virtue in a superior degree and gave numberless proofs of it. Scarcely had He begun His preaching when a current, first of opposition, and then of violent hatred, turned against Him,

[626] Heb. 12:2.
[627] Luke 7:44–46.
[628] Mark 14:8.
[629] Mark 14:48 f.; Luke 22:52 f., 67–69; John 18:23.
[630] Matt. 26:62 f.; 27:12–14; Mark 14:60 f.; 15:4 f.; Luke 23:9; John 19:9.
[631] Matt. 26:56 f.; John 18:19–21, 34, 36 f.; cfr. Origen, *Contra Celsum,* II, 34; Landriot, *Le Christ de la Tradition,* 2d ed., II, 350.

threatening to overthrow Him and carry Him off. But nothing frightened Him, nothing exhausted His heroic patience, which was able to withstand it all.[632] Neither the pride of some nor the prejudices of others, neither the ignorance of the multitude nor the knowing malice of the Pharisees, succeeded in disturbing, much less in shaking, His calm valor. In spite of fatigue and excessive labor, He was ever ready to receive gently and lovingly the sick, the afflicted, the curious, the hostile, the often inconsiderate crowds that came to Him. His Apostles themselves, by their slowness in grasping His mission and His lessons, by their Messianic ideal opposed to His, occasioned Him more than one suffering, and He rebuked them for it in strong terms, since He was their teacher.[633] Elsewhere, in speaking of His holy emotions, we have remarked that His patience should not be confounded with that of easy-going, listless characters, in whom it is a weakness rather than a virtue. During His Passion, Christ was more than ever a model of courageous patience, as Isaias had foretold: "He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth."[634] And St. Peter, in his First Epistle, says: "Who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not."[635] Yet the Savior did experience, in an habitual manner, a generous impatience, which He expresses in these sublime words: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"[636] In this matter, however, He was able to moderate the eagerness of His soul and wait in peace, without wishing, by useless haste, to advance "the hour" marked in the

[632] Cf. Tertullian, *De Patientia*, 3; St. Cyprian, *De Bona Patient.*, 6 and 7, etc.
[633] Matt. 15:16; 16:8–11, 22 f.; Luke 9:55, etc.
[634] Is. 53:7.
[635] 1 Pet. 2:23.
[636] Luke 12:50.

divine plan, which was ever present to His mind.[637] This is why, on several occasions, instead of coping with His enemies in an untimely way, He did not hesitate to retire for a more or less lengthy period,[638] in order to evade their snares, until the moment was come to go forth to meet them without fear.

Often also it was His love of recollection and solitude that led Him, if only for a few hours, to withdraw from the crowds, sometimes alone,[639] sometimes with His Apostles.[640] His soul acquired renewed strength in retreat, where He often engaged in prolonged prayer. He likewise took advantage of such retirement to train the Twelve at greater leisure. A certain expression used by St. Luke [641] is characteristic in this connection, for it indicates a habit strictly so called. Several of the most important mysteries in the life of Christ,—such as His Baptism, His temptation, His agony at Gethsemani,—occurred in at least comparative solitude. To this love of retreat, Christ joined, even during the periods when He delivered numerous discourses, a great *love of silence*. The *Verbum silens* of the hidden life kept His habits to the very end, and no idle word ever came from His lips.

Lastly, let us note, in the Savior's moral temperament, two qualities of a general character—*simplicity* and *serenity*—which have not received sufficient attention. Nothing was less complex than His frank, upright nature. While remarkable from many points of view, His words were without implications that could pervert their meaning; they were pellucid like His soul. With His enemies as with His friends, His dealings were marked by the utmost fairness; thus we can understand how He abhorred the hypocrisy of the Scribes and

[637] Cfr. Mark 14:41; John 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1.

[638] Cfr. Matt. 14:13 Mark 3:7; 7:24; John 7:1; 8:59; 10:39 f.; 11:54–56.

[639] Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 6:12; 9:18; 11:1, etc.

[640] Matt. 17:1; Mark 1:45; 4:35; 6:31; 7:24; 8:27, etc.

[641] Luke 5:16: ἦν ὑποχωρῶν.

Pharisees, against which He protested ceaselessly.[642] These knavish men had to acknowledge His extraordinary sincerity, as it were, in spite of themselves. One day they addressed Him on this subject with words of praise that were far from being sincere: "Master, we know that thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man." [643] He proclaimed the truth with untiring zeal; that is why He had a right to say to Pilate [644] that He was come to bear witness to the truth. That truth He often had to promulgate under new and delicate forms, hard to utter and to accept. He was obliged to stand up against inveterate prejudices, against a whole religious system which had had its day. He had to reform a whole nation, over whom men of power were exercising an unfortunate influence. He had to teach lofty doctrines, to establish His own mission on the ruins of the past. But His honesty and simplicity were united with courage and, without letting Himself be intimidated, He made all Palestine hear the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. More than that, He induced a considerable number of His fellow-countrymen to accept it. Not solicitous for a vain and unwholesome popularity, He went straight ahead, like a knight without stain or fear, attacking error and evil in every shape and form. As St. Peter said,[645] taking a text from Isaias, *"Non inventus est dolus in ore eius."* [646] On His lips could be found neither exaggeration, nor a slurring of the truth, nor the least flattery.[647]

[642] Cfr. Matt. 6:1–18; 7:15–20; 23:23–28; Luke 13:15–17, etc.
[643] Matt. 22:16; cfr. Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21.
[644] John 18:37.
[645] 1 Pet. 2:22.
[646] Is. 53:9.
[647] Msgr. Landriot treats this subject most eloquently in a fine page of his much esteemed work, *Le Christ de la Tradition,* II, 307 f.: "Nothing in Christ's character is so remarkable as that openness, that loyalty of soul which goes straight ahead, ignoring evasions, whose speech is a light emanating from within, whose mode of action is the expression of an inner feeling. Governed by the Word,

In this so noble and holy character we also discover, not without a pleasant surprise, a whole series of contrasts, the *ensemble* of which is equivalent to an additional perfection. They are varied aspects of His rich nature. In it mildness and vigor, mercy and just sternness join hands. Christ is humble to excess, yet at times His intrepidity becomes indignant for a moment. He is tenderly faithful in His affections, yet He severs the closest and most legitimate bonds when they obstruct the path of duty. He is born Lord and Master, yet with winning grace He makes Himself the servant of all. His courage is that of heroes, yet it comes to pass that He is distressed. He is submissive to authority, yet He acts with independence. He is peaceful, yet He brings war. He mistrusts men, knowing their instability, and He loves them even to dying for them on the cross. He would have the Mosaic law obeyed, and He delivers hard blows to the traditions claiming to explain and supplement it. He seeks solitude, and He frequents the world. His life is one of extreme mortification, and He readily takes part in banquets. He would draw all men to Himself, and with a word He dismisses those who hesitate to follow Him. He is detached from all things, yet He requires that one should leave all things in order to be attached to His person. He is a contemplative, and at the same time a man of action.

There is, of course, not the slightest conflict between these

which is God's own truth, this holy soul always walked in the way of righteousness and candor. Never an evasion, never any of those underground procedures which politicians name clever moves, successful tactics. He has no need of all these devices of human prudence; truth is His policy, uprightness is His cleverness. But never is He reproached with having taken a false step, with having uttered an imprudent word. The eternal wisdom that guides Him keeps Him always to that difficult line where the simplicity of the dove does not detract from the prudence of the serpent, where the prudence of the serpent supplements the simplicity of the dove. With unyielding determination He keeps to the middle path, and equally removed from extremes, equally distant from political wile and from lack of wisdom, He walks in the way of truth; truth is His element."

different virtues, which form in Him a delicately harmonious whole. He really possessed, as St. John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel,[648] the "fullness" of human virtues, as well as the fullness of divine grace. Lastly, whereas in the case of most great men one quality develops at the expense of others,—for example, the intellect to the detriment of the heart, or vice versa,—the Savior's moral qualities, after growing simultaneously, manifest themselves one after the other in the most normal fashion without causing any hurt to one another. What results from all these contrasts is the multiplicity of gifts and virtues of the soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. *The Human Will and the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Once the Word had consented to put on our nature, it was in order for Him to have a human will, entirely distinct from His divine will. The Gospels leave no doubt on this point, which, moreover, has been formally defined by the Church [649] after a famous controversy. We hear Christ Himself speak of His human will in the clearest terms. "I came down from heaven," He says, "not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." [650] His generous prayer at Gethsemani affirms the same fact: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." [651] Evidently Christ's divine will is blended with that of His Father; thus, during that hour of poignant agony, there was an incipient struggle between it and His human will; it was a short struggle, which could end only by the complete triumph of the divine will. Then the Savior might

[648] John 1:16.
[649] At the Third Council of Constantinople, in 680.
[650] John 6:38.
[651] Matt. 26:39; cfr. Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42.

say, as on a former occasion: "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." [652]

The will is the self in what is deepest, truest, and loftiest in man. It plays a preponderant part in the formation of character and, generally, in every individual's history. We have no need of insisting on the evident fact that, throughout His earthly existence, the Savior's will was absolutely perfect, like all the qualities of His soul.

We have just quoted some of His words that reveal a complete submission to the designs of His Heavenly Father, whatever sacrifice they call for. The Fourth Gospel contains several others, which bear witness to this perfect conformity of Christ's human will with that of God. *"Quae placita sunt ei, facio semper."* [653] This expression admirably sums them up. St. Paul [654] gives a dramatic description of the obedience of the Incarnate Word, representing Him as entering into the world and addressing God in this sublime prayer, in words taken from the Psalmist: [655] "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me; holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God." This first use which Christ made of His will He continually renewed, and He died bearing true witness that He had carried out the divine plan without altering an iota: *"Consummatum est"* (It is consummated).[656] The most important details of His life were determined in advance by the ancient prophecies; never, no matter what it might cost His human nature, did He depart from them by a hair's breadth. His full and entire obedience, amidst

[652] Matt. 11:26; Luke 10:21.

[653] John 8:29; likewise John 4:34: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me," and 5:30: "I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me."

[654] Heb. 10:5–7.

[655] Ps. 39:7–9.

[656] John 19:30.

difficulties that would have appeared insurmountable to anyone else, was one of the most characteristic virtues of Jesus. St. Paul, who understood the soul of Christ so well, emphasizes this perfection in another eloquent phrase: *"Factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis."*[657] None ever was like the Savior in prompt, generous, and cheerful obedience.

In Christ's human will we must next admire its unparalleled *energy*. Obstacles perpetually rise up before the most determined of men when they decide to lead a perfect life, or even when they simply resolve to abandon the wide road of evil in order to follow the steep path of ordinary virtue.[658] To remain faithful to duty, Christ, of course, did not have to struggle against pride or concupiscence or the moral weaknesses which in us disturb the intellect, hinder freedom, weaken vigor; nevertheless, He had to exericse His will at every moment. And He never failed to repeat, in one form or another, by His acts or by His words, His generous *"Ita, Pater."* The devil found to his cost that he had to reckon with Christ's will, when he thrice presumed to tempt Him; and St. Peter, when he tried to turn his Master aside from the path of duty;[659] and likewise the "brethren" of Christ, when they undertook to force on Him a plan which was not that of God.[660] His enemies, His judges, His executioners, in like manner found Him invincible. No power was able, we will not say to sweep Him from His path, but to make Him introduce the slightest modification into the designs of Providence.[661] Thus did He verify the picture which the Prophet

[657] Phil. 2:8.

[658] No one has better described these inward struggles than the Apostle of the Gentiles in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

[659] Matt. 16:20–23.

[660] John 7:1–10.

[661] Cfr. Luke 13:31–33.

Isaias drew of Him long before: "The Lord God is my helper, therefore am I not confounded." [662] This is why, as the time of His Passion drew near, He hastened, with an eagerness which the Apostles could not understand, toward Jerusalem, the city "that kills the prophets," [663] which was, so to speak, the citadel of His most implacable enemies. In this He imitated the proverbial valor of His ancestor, David. Never has the world seen so indomitable a hero as Christ.

"To will is to be able to do," it has been said. But we may truthfully add, considering the human will in another aspect: "To will is to love." This transition brings us to the *Sacred Heart of Jesus.* The liturgy praises its "impenetrable riches," [664] and the mystical theologians have not failed to develop so true and beautiful an idea.[665] A great thinker has said that he did not allow his mind to stifle the sentiments of his heart. In the case of Christ, neither the superiority of His intellectual faculties, nor the constant cares of His zeal, nor His faithfulness in fulfilling His Father's will, were able to lessen the force and tenderness of His holy affections.

From the moral point of view, the human heart is rightly considered the organ of love. It is made chiefly for the exercise of love and, when everything is rightly ordered, that is one of the finest faculties of the will. To speak of Christ's heart according to the Gospels is, therefore, to endeavor to penetrate as deeply as possible into that sanctuary and to seek to find out what were its affections and their motives. As-

[662] Is. 50:7.

[663] Cfr. Matt. 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34; John 11:7–10.

[664] *"Investigabiles divitias Cordis tui";* Collect of the office of the Sacred Heart, according to the proper of the diocese of Autun. It is partly quoted from St. Paul, Eph. 3:8.

[665] See especially, among recent works, Bainvel, *La Dévotion au Sacré Cœur de Jésus,* 1906, and L. Garriguet, *Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus, Exposé Historique et Dogmatique de la Dévotion au Sacré Cœur,* 1919. Our purpose is more modest. We will merely sketch, with the help of the Gospels, the chief traits of the Divine Master's Heart.

suredly, never did a more perfect heart beat in a human breast, and it is evident that all its sympathies had their share of that perfection. In the Canticle of Canticles we read this profound saying: "He set in order charity in me." [666] The most perfect order constantly reigned in the Divine Master's heart, keeping His affections strictly disciplined.

Later on, when we listen to Christ's preaching, we shall see the prominent place which love of God and love of neighbor holds in it. This double love held an even more notable place in His heart and His deeds than in His words. In the first place we may say that the love of God was at all times the dominant passion of His soul, the essential function of His heart, the hearth at which His zeal was perpetually kindled. The holiest men are aware that their love for God is very imperfect and that it is incapable of attaining in extent and intensity that measure called for by the perfections of its object or of corresponding to the ardor of their own desires. Christ, on the contrary, did truly love God "with His whole heart and with His whole mind," [667] and it was this boundless love that set His whole life in motion.

First of all, it was a filial sentiment of unspeakable power and charm. On the day of His Baptism, His Heavenly Father said to Him: "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." [668] The heart of this only Son replied, with incomparable fondness: *"Abba, Father,"* [669] a most sweet name, that He ever cherished in His heart and frequently had on His lips.[670] With what fondness He must have uttered those sim-

[666] Cant. 2:4, following the Vulgate translation. The Hebrew has another meaning.

[667] Matt. 22:37.

[668] Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. An almost identical utterance is heard from heaven during the Savior's Transfiguration. Cfr. Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:6; Luke 9:35.

[669] Mark 14:36.

[670] Cfr. Matt. 7:21; 10:32 f.; 11:25–27; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17; 18:19, 35; 20:23; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; Luke 2:49, etc.; still oftener in the Fourth Gospel.

ple words: "My Father!" His filial love echoes through all His speech, is reflected in all His deeds. We see it pass into the descriptions of God that He gives here and there, picturing Him as the best and kindest of fathers.[671] He especially showed it, as we said above, by complete obedience to the divine commands, since to use a famous saying, *idem velle, idem nolle, ea firma amicitia est.*[672] But we also saw that His Father did not spare Him and that by harsh experience He was to learn what it sometimes costs to obey without reserve.[673]

Christ likewise showed His filial love by a close union with the Father. He constantly thought of God and lived in Him. He had an insatiable thirst for God, and He might have said more truly than did the exiled Psalmist, far away from the tabernacle: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God." [674] Hence those frequent prayers overflowing with love, mentioned by the Evangelists.[675] In fine, this filial sentiment was revealed by a trust, proof against anything, which never left Him, not even when, on the cross, His life ebbed away with each drop of blood, and His Father seemed to have abandoned Him. Scarcely had He breathed his sorrowful plaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [676] when He gently added: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" [677] It was likewise His boundless trust that made Him say at Gethsemani: "Father, all things are possible to thee," [678] and just as He was about

[671] *E. g.*, Matt. 5:45; 6:4, 6, 18, 26–33; 10:29–32; 11:25; 18:10, 14, etc.

[672] Sallust.

[673] Cfr. Heb. 5:8.

[674] Ps. 41:2.

[675] It has long since been remarked that St. Luke is especially exact in noting them. Cfr. Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:18; 11:1 22:41–46 (and the parallel passages in St. Matthew and St. Mark); 23:34, 46. See also Mark 1:35; John 11:41 f.; 17:1–26, etc.

[676] Matt. 27:46.

[677] Luke 23:46.

[678] Mark 14:36.

to raise Lazarus to life: "Father, . . . I knew that thou hearest me always." [679] His love overflowed into His sacerdotal prayer,[680] which is not less a hymn of trust than a hymn of love and triumph.

We need not seek elsewhere than in this love of Our Lord Jesus Christ for His Heavenly Father, to find the secret of that heroic strength which we admire in Him. In fact, from this sentiment, the loftiest and purest of any that has power to move a human soul, were born forgetfulness of self, unselfish and unlimited devotion, generous sacrifices, the total and irrevocable giving of self: virtues which the Savior practiced in a supreme degree.

But His love of God could not suffice for His great heart. Did He not say that the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is like to the first? [681] Did He not attach such importance to it, did He not promulgate it anew with such vigor, that He made it His commandment *par excellence? "Hoc est praeceptum meum ut diligatis invicem."* And, as always, joining example to precept, He added: *"sicut dilexi vos."* [682] This "philanthropy of God our Savior," as St. Paul calls it,[683] we have already seen in one of its most striking forms in the mystery of the Incarnation. Every day of His public life we shall see repeated proofs of this "charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge." [684] But, according to His own saying, it is during His sorrowful Passion that it will be manifested with the greatest clearness and power, since "greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends," [685] and that the Good

[679] John 11: 41 f.
[680] John 17: 1–26.
[681] Matt. 22: 39; Mark 12: 31.
[682] John 15: 12.
[683] Tit. 3: 4: *φιλανθρωπία*, love of men.
[684] Eph. 3: 18 f.
[685] John 15: 13.

Shepherd will be recognized in His boundless devotedness, prompting Him to sacrifice His life for His sheep.[686] The holy image of His Sacred Heart, from which issue flames of burning charity, is an excellent emblem of the Savior's love for us; so, too, the cross, erected in so many places by the Catholic Church, is a no less expressive symbol.

Love of fallen humanity, which He came to redeem at the price of humiliation and suffering, was thus, after His love for God, the second of the great passions of Christ's soul. No one ever fulfilled as He did the divine picture of charity, as drawn with a master hand by the Apostle of the Gentiles in the thirteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. And furthermore, such a picture would not have been possible if Our Lord Jesus Christ had not been its ideal model. His love for us was the more meritorious as its object was the more imperfect and wretched. But His heart was the heart of a God as well as the heart of a man; that is why it was endowed with an amazing power.

This sympathy felt the need of expressing itself outwardly, like ours, and it did so by every means that Christ had at His disposal: by miracles, which were usually acts of love; by kindly appeals, like that preserved by St. Matthew;[687] by warmly urged counsel: "Love one another; Love your enemies; Be merciful," etc.;[688] and by His compassion for all kinds of suffering. This love sometimes forced from Him groans,[689] tears,[690] and sobs.[691]. The Evangelists often express it by the use of a Greek verb that indicates very keen emotion.[692] It

[686] John 10:11; cfr. 10:15, 17, 18; also Matt. 10:6, etc.

[687] Matt. 11:28.

[688] Matt. 5:21–24, 39–47; 18:23–33; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:31, 38; 10:25–37, etc.

[689] Mark 7:34.

[690] John 11:35; cfr. Heb. 5:7 f.

[691] Luke 19:41.

[692] The verb σπλαγχνίζεσθαι, to feel emotion even to the depth of the bowels. Cfr. Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13; 10:33, etc.

was also shown by the generous pardon that He granted to His enemies,[693] by His infinite mercy towards sinners, and by His tender, heavenly friendships.

Let us briefly develop these last two traits. The Pharisees and their disciples, so hard-hearted and full of pride, ostracised, as it were, certain categories of sinners, such as the publicans, and even went so far as to fix mathematically the distance by which one should hold aloof from them. The heart of Jesus was an abyss of mercy and, as the good Master was come into this world precisely to convert and save sinful souls, He did not fear to associate with sinners. His adversaries were deeply scandalized by this and let no opportunity go by to blame Him.[694] Various incidents of His life,—His conversation with the Samaritan woman,[695] the episode of the sinful woman,[696] that of the woman taken in adultery,[697] that of Zacheus,[698] and several of His parables (such as those of the Lost Sheep [699] and of the Prodigal Son [700]) are characteristic from this point of view and show us the depth of His love. As Isaias [701] had foretold, He took care not to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax; but He gently straightened the former and rekindled the latter.

The study of the Divine Master's heart makes us feel true consolation and profound joy in seeing that, like us, He experienced the desire and perhaps even the need of more fondly and intimately loving certain groups, certain persons, who had a special claim on His fondness. Among these groups, we might cite His country, His disciples—considered as a

[693] Luke 23:34.
[694] Matt. 9:10–13; 11:19; Luke 7:39, etc.
[695] John 4:7–26.
[696] Luke 7:36–50.
[697] John 8: 7–11.
[698] Luke 19:1–10.
[699] Matt. 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7.
[700] Luke 15:11–32.
[701] Is. 42:3. Cf. Matt. 12:20.

whole—the Apostolic College, little children. Although He belonged to all humanity, as St. Luke indicates [702] by tracing His genealogy back to Adam, yet Christ was first of all a true son of Abraham; it was to His fatherland strictly so called, to Palestine, that He wished to devote His personal ministry. "I was not sent," He said, "but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." [703] How He pities those poor sheep left without a shepherd! [704] What a tender fondness for Jerusalem, the center and representative of the whole nation, He showed in that exquisitely loving apostrophe: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!" [705] How greatly He desired to lead her people back to the right path and to spare them the terrible evils that awaited them in the near future! [706]

When Our Lord, stretching forth His hand towards the disciples gathered about Him, uttered these loving words: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother," [707] He showed that all those who believed in Him held a special place in His heart and were united to Him by bonds as close as those of blood. His Apostles were naturally still dearer to Him. He had chosen them to be His co-laborers and successors in the great work of His life, the establishment of His Church. He took them and kept them near Him to have them share His life and labors for almost three years; He trained them, as we shall see, with a mother's affection. In His farewell discourse He says to them with

[702] Luke 3:38.
[703] Matt. 15:24.
[704] Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34.
[705] Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34.
[706] See also Luke 19:41–44.
[707] Matt. 12:49 f.

charming sincerity and simplicity: "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you; . . . I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." [708] In another place the same sacred writer says: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end," [709] or, more correctly, "even to excess." In this intimate circle there were some more intimate than the rest—Peter, James the Greater, and John—who accompanied the Savior on several specially important occasions of His life.[710]

But the Heart of Jesus wished to know still more closely the delights and holy joys of human friendship. When Our Lord met a particularly pure soul that gave itself to Him with a greater generosity than usual, He showed toward such a one in return a special sort of fondness. According to St. Bernard's beautiful words, "He showed forth all the fondness of His heart; His whole soul opened out, and the most exquisite fragrance,—the fragrance of a beautiful soul, of a noble and generous heart,—expanded like an invisible vapor." [711] Jesus then became the incomparable Friend, faithful and devoted above all others.

Several of His friendships are justly famous.[712] That which comes first to mind and was perhaps the fondest, is recalled by the discreet yet eloquent formula found in the Fourth Gospel: "The disciple whom Jesus loved." [713] What a treasure of affection in those simple words! And they are supplemented by that inexpressibly beautiful incident that oc-

[708] John 15:9, 15.

[709] John 13:1.

[710] When He raised to life the daughter of Jairus, Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51; at His Transfiguration, Matt. 17:1, etc.; at His agony, Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33. See also Mark 13:3–36.

[711] *In Cantic.*, XXXI, 7.

[712] See Olliver's interesting work, *Les Amitiés de Jésus*, 1895, and Lacordaire's charming brochure, *Marie-Madeleine*.

[713] John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.

curred during the Last Supper: "There was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved," [714] and again the memorable incident on Calvary: [715] "When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son . . . After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother." [716]

Another of the Savior's friendships is revealed to us by the message from the sisters of Lazarus,—a message at once loving, trustful, and sorrowful: "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." [717] But Lazarus was not the only member of that family to enjoy the favor of Christ. Martha and Mary had their large share of it, as the author of the Fourth Gospel indicates by this expressive phrase: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus." [718] And this friendship, whose intimacy is described by St. John in terms as delicate as they are strong, in the eleventh chapter of his Gospel, dated back some time, as may be inferred from a charming incident related by St. Luke.[719]

Christ even experienced deception in friendship. What could be more touching than St. Mark's statement in reference to the rich young man, who had just declared with all frankness that he had faithfully observed the commandments of the Decalogue: "Jesus looking on him,[720] loved him." So strongly did He love him that He would have wished to attach him closely to His person and no more be separated from him. But the test to which our Lord subjected him, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come, follow me," proved too much for that imperfect

[714] John 13:23.

[715] John 19: 26 f.

[716] On Christ's friendship for St. John, see Bossuet's fine panegyric, *Œuvres,* Versailles ed., XVI, 552–565.

[717] John 11:3.

[718] John 11:5.

[719] Luke 10:38–42; see also John 12:1–11; cfr. Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9.

[720] Mark 10:21; *ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ*, Vulg., *intuitus eum.*

soul, "who being struck at that saying, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Judas' betrayal, Simon Peter's triple denial, the flight of all the Apostles at Gethsemani, were also grievous blows to the sensitive heart of the Master.

Let us conclude this enumeration of the Savior's friendships by one of the most touching: that which He showed for little children. A great thinker of the last century wrote: "We are almost tempted to ask ourselves: How is it that the eternal God stoops to poor little creatures scarcely able to understand Him, and why these privileged familiarities of the eternal Wisdom? The doctors answer that childhood is ordinarily full of candor and ingenuity: its clear, honest eye reflects the simplicity of its soul. So Christ, who loved truth, . . . was fond of gathering around Him those little faces full of innocence and artlessness." [721]

We shall later have occasion to cite this significant incident: "Taking a child, he set him in the midst" of the Apostles, to whom He wished to give a lesson in humility; "whom when he had embraced, he saith to them: Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in my name, receiveth me." [722] How fondly He takes up their defense against these same Apostles when, in their desire to spare Him what they considered an importunity, they tried to prevent their mothers from presenting them to Him to receive His blessing. "Suffer the little children," He said firmly, "and forbid them not to come to me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such," and for those who are like them.[723] In another place His words show how attentively He had observed the games and characters of children.[724] Again, He compares His disciples to

[721] Guizot, *Méditations sur l'Essence de la Religion,* pp. 318 f.
[722] Mark 9:35 f.
[723] Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:15 f.
[724] Matt. 11:16.

little children;[725] or He quotes a beautiful passage from the Psalms,[726] where it is said that God is pleased with the praise that comes from the mouth of children.[727] He does not wish them to be despised;[728] He pronounces a severe condemnation upon all who scandalize them.[729] On the other hand, these little ones, so apt in recognizing their true friends, show a fond and guileless trust in Him, whenever the occasion offers.[730]

Such were Christ's principal friendships, sincere, deep, faithful, generous, and, we need not add, always virile, without silliness, worthy of a heart at once strong and sensitive, rooted perpetually in the supernatural and the divine. But we must insist that our Lord's sympathies were not the monopoly of a few special classes of society or of a few privileged individuals. They were universal, excluding none. If we glance at His most intimate circle, we see Levi the publican and the traitor Judas. Among the holy women whom He allowed to accompany Him at times on His journeys, we notice, along with Johanna, who was the wife of one of the chief officers at the court of the tetrarch Herod, Mary Magdalen, whom He had freed from seven devils. He is willing to sit at the table of Martha and Mary, but accords the same favor to Simon the Pharisee, to Levi, and to Zacheus. All classes shared in His miraculous favors. Considered from this same point of view, His speech did not differ from His conduct. Thus, when He was asked to define the word "neighbor," He chose an example from the hated Samaritans;[731] another time,

[725] Luke 10:21: νήπιοι.
[726] Ps. 8:3.
[727] Matt. 21:16.
[728] Matt. 18:10.
[729] Matt. 18:6.
[730] Matt. 21:16.
[731] Luke 10:29–37.

He praised the faith of a pagan centurion.[732] All men had a place in His affection.

The Heart of Jesus, as several of the above quoted details prove, was no less remarkable for its exquisite sensibility. Says Bossuet: "Never did a man have passions so tender and delicate . . . as my Savior, although they were extremely subdued" [733] and always perfectly regulated. On this same subject Father Faber says: "The tenderness of His Sacred Heart was perfect in the fullest sense of the word. No one has ever been gifted with affection like His. There has never been a sensitiveness which could be thought of alongside of His. In their strength, in their depth, in their fidelity, in their delicacy, never had human affections been so divinely impassioned. . . . The purity of their vehemence was from His surpassing sanctity. His human love was a thing by itself, a marvellous chaste fire, a might of vehement tenderness, to which there is no similitude in creation. But it was divine also as well as human. No little measure of that yearning and abounding love which the Creator alone can feel was communicated to the affection of His human Heart. Hence no love of mother, wife, or sister was ever, for passionate softness, like to His." [734]

On one very affecting occasion, Christ was pleased to declare openly the incomparable gentleness of His heart: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." [735] Even the bitter Marcion could not help acknowledging that this gentleness was truly one of the characteristic traits of

[732] Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9.

[733] Third sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

[734] *Bethlehem,* I, 428. The same author in another work (*Spiritual Conferences,* 2d ed., p. 322) writes: 'Theology tells us that Our Blessed Lord's Body was especially formed for suffering. In like manner we should suppose that His Sacred Heart was sensitive above all other hearts. It is this which carries the sufferings of His Passion deeper down than we can follow them."

[735] Matt. 11:29.

Christ.[736] It constituted, indeed, the very groundwork of His nature, as Pope St. Clement [737] and St. Polycarp [738] have said. Numerous incidents of His public life and Passion throw into relief His meekness, His kindliness, His affability, His goodheartedness. When the sons of Zebedee spoke of calling down fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village which had refused to receive them, He calmed their indignation by recalling that the spirit of the New Covenant was not the same as that of the Old.[739] Nor was He willing that a certain man who made use of His name to perform miracles should be treated with severity, although He was not a real disciple.[740] With what gentle kindness He thought of procuring a few days' rest for His Apostles, when they rejoined Him, tired, after their first mission![741] So also, on two occasions, He had not the heart to send away hungry the crowds that had followed Him into His retreat, but performed a miracle to satisfy their hunger.[742] He finds gracious words of excuse for Mary's pious prodigality, which Judas indignantly criticized.[743] After having overcome His anguish at Gethsemani, not satisfied with forgiving His three favorite Apostles for falling asleep at the very hour when He most needed their sympathy, He invites them to go on resting and stays near them until the arrival of His executioners.[744] The gentleness which He ceaselessly practiced, He earnestly recommended at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in the form of one of the Beati-

[736] Cfr. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.*, I, 27.
[737] *Epist. ad Cor.*, I, xiii, 16.
[738] *Epist. ad Phil.*, VIII.
[739] Luke 9:52–56.
[740] Mark 9:37:40.
[741] Mark 6:31.
[742] Mark 6:34–44; 8:2–9.
[743] Matt. 26:10–13.
[744] Matt. 26:45 f.

tudes.[745] He preached mercy from the cross by asking God to forgive His executioners.[746]

It was from His gentleness and kindness that came, in part at least, His marvelous power of attraction, which St. Jerome [747] justly compares to an extraordinary lodestone; St. Augustine,[748] to a perfume of great value which the whole world longs to breathe. Origen, going still farther, compares it to a sort of enchantment and fascination. Such was this power that Jesus needed only a relatively short ministry to alter the progress of history and transform the character of human life.[749] What a crowd we see gathered around Him at the very outset of His preaching! They come from every district of Palestine, and even from Syria, Idumea, Tyre, and Sidon.[750] And with what respectful familiarity they treat the kind Master! For them to indulge thus in occupying His time and strength and miraculous power, it must be that they had discovered inexhaustible treasures of kindness in Him.

This concourse of people which was incessant for more than a year, evidently presupposes that Christ exercised a powerful attraction upon all. Although His miracles and the nature of His preaching contributed in a great measure to make Him popular, the charm that emanated from His whole Person and especially from His Sacred Heart, also played a considerable part in creating that current of affection and enthusiasm. True He had—and that rather early—numerous enemies, whose hatred kept on increasing; but also many

[745] Matt. 5:4.

[746] Luke 23:34.

[747] *Comment. in Matth.*, 9:9.

[748] *In Ps.*, 103.

[749] Crooker, *The Supremacy of Jesus*, p. 120. The author is a very advanced critic.

[750] Cfr. Matt. 4:24 f.; 12:15; 15:30; 21:14; Mark 1:45; 3:7–10; 6:54–56; Luke 4:14 f.; 5:15; 6:17–19; 7:21, etc.

friends, amazingly devoted to Him. And it is a joy to note that those who observed Him most closely, who lived with Him in most intimate association, who were daily witnesses of His conduct, are precisely the ones who loved Him most fondly, who believed in Him most strongly, and who shed their blood for Him.

Such was the human nature of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The simple sketch that we have given of it has enabled us to admire in it an *ensemble* of all perfections. The conclusion of this study therefore is that the Savior must be placed in a category all by Himself, far above all men, even the greatest and the holiest. His features, viewed in their different aspects according to documents of indisputable authenticity and truthfulness, appear to us, as to His most devoted disciples, ideally beautiful and pure, verily unique. Even should humanity advance for many centuries more, ever progressing from perfection to perfection, it would never succeed in producing a second Jesus. Jesus Christ will ever be the universal archetype, the model for all times and countries.

And now the sacred drama of the public life of Christ is about to begin. We shall see Him advancing with giant strides, like a conqueror of souls whom nothing can stop. For Him, as for John the Baptist, retreat and silence have been an admirable preparation. His outer development is complete.

APPENDICES

I. Intrinsic Proofs of the Authenticity of the Gospels vs. Rationalist Criticism

In spite of its exactness and undeniable worth, or rather on account of this very worth, the effect of which they would like to destroy, the tradition regarding the Apostolic origin of the Gospels has been violently attacked by members of the school which goes by the general name of "Rationalist," whatever its various shades of doctrine were and still are.[751] The members of this school would be glad to prove that the Gospels do not possess the authority attributed to them and are in no sense the works of SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As tradition stands against them, they naturally have tried to depreciate it.

After having first affected to scorn it[752] and to take no more notice of it than if it did not exist, they now employ more insidious tactics. They start out by recognizing its usefulness in the present case, and even praising it. Thus Dr. Wernle says: "As we have been handed the four Gospels by tradition, it is quite right that we should seek information on the subject of their origin by questioning tradition,—the earliest tradition we can reach."[753] After a short exposition of the state of the case, he is forced to admit: "Assuredly we have here an ancient and important tradition . . . That we can go back so far is a great deal." But after making this

[751] "Rationalists," strictly speaking, "critics," "modern theologians," "Liberal Christians": at bottom these are only denominational variations, for all agree in rejecting the supernatural and in acknowledging no authority but reason.

[752] See, for example, E. Reuss, *Histoire Évangélique*, p. 91.

[753] *Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu*, 1904, p. 9.

embarrassing acknowledgment, as it were in spite of himself, this scholar eagerly proceeds in perfidious fashion to cast doubt on these ancient, weighty, and numerous testimonies. "Is this tradition true?" he asks, and goes on: "We cannot say that we know. It is the study of the Evangelists themselves that will tell us. In fact, the early vouchers for the tradition . . . are not very well known. We are not sure whether they were sufficiently well-informed on the question of the origin of the Gospels to enable their testimony to remove all doubt."

We have already refuted this objection in an indirect way by showing the trustworthy character and reliable knowledge of the witnesses cited, as also the horror they had for the slightest innovation in Christian teaching. Who would charge St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, or Origen (not to speak of others), with making reckless statements? They were real scholars, who had personally and conscientiously studied the facts and questioned on the spot whoever was competent to give them information. We have likewise remarked that from the beginning of the Church tradition played an immense part, and everyone was desirous of transmitting it in its full integrity. Lastly, those who assail it too easily forget that the links composing it at the end of the second century were in many places so few that its faithful transmission offered the best guaranties. Thus it is that between St. Irenaeus and St. John the Apostle there is only one link, St. Polycarp, so that it was morally impossible not to succeed in learning the truth on a question of fact so easy to ascertain as the authorship of the Gospels. Let us recall, in fine, that the assertions of the Fathers which we have cited have the greater value and their evidence is the more important when it is remembered that they speak to us from four great centers of the ancient Church—from Antioch and Alexandria, from Ephe-

sus and Rome," [754] and also, we may add from Gaul by the voice of St. Irenaeus.

II. The Testimony of the Apostolic Fathers

This testimony has been attacked from various angles. In opposition to it the critics adduce two facts: (1) The Gospel quotations, allusions, and reminiscences that are to be met with in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers nearly always lack exactness, a circumstance which deprives them of much of their force; (2) The earliest Fathers at times cite the apocryphal as well as the canonical Gospels, making no distinction between the two classes. Let us briefly examine these two objections.

1. We do not claim that the Gospel quotations, reminiscences, and allusions which occur in the Epistle of Barnabas, the *Didaché,* the writings of SS. Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, etc., considered apart, are absolutely conclusive in favor of the thesis we have developed. Some of them, indeed, might come from oral tradition. It is their *ensemble* that must be considered. But their *ensemble* constitutes a very weighty proof. Let us recall, what our opponents too easily forget, that the first Christian writers, like the generality of ancient authors, did not have the modern habit of giving chapter and verse for their citations. Let us also note that the writings of the sub-Apostolic period are mostly simple pastoral letters containing exhortations and words of encouragement for the faithful. It is not reasonable to demand of them the precision of a doctrinal treatise. Moreover, the testimony which they give to the canonical Gospels rarely takes the form of demonstration, but is usually indirect and incidental. Hence it is all the

[754] Westcott, *General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament,* 2d ed., p. 52.

more cogent, for it proves that our four Gospels were in current use throughout the Church, since the slightest allusions to them were at once understood by all. If the quotations are not strictly verbal, this is in keeping with the habits of that time, which were much less exacting than ours. Most often they were made from memory, for the men of that time did not always have the sacred text before their eyes. Consequently it would be unjust and unreasonable to apply to the Gospels and other New Testament books an exceptional treatment which no one would dream of using for Caesar's *Commentaries,* Tacitus' *Annals,* Demosthenes' *Orations,* or any other classical work.[755]

2. There has been a singular exaggeration in speaking of the number of quotations which some of the early Fathers took from the apocryphal gospels.[756] Perchance, as St. Jerome [757] surmised, St. Ignatius of Antioch took one simple phrase from the Gospel of the Hebrews; but there is no certainty about it. Perchance also St. Hegesippus is indebted to that same apocryphal book.[758] But these are exceptional cases which we need not discuss here. St. Justin was acquainted with the Protevangel of James, Thomas the Israelite's Gospel of the Infancy, and the Acts of Pilate; but there is nothing to prove that he derived from these writings any new elements which he added to the life of Christ. Furthermore, with respect to these elements he never employs the formulas, "It is

[755] On this point, see Dr. Stanton's excellent remarks in *The Gospels as Historical Documents,* Vol. I, "The Early Use of the Gospels," pp. 1–28.

[756] Harnack (*Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200,* p. 47) affirms that they are "very frequent." He would be much embarrassed if he were obliged to prove his assertion, at least to follow the example of Volkmar, one of the leading disciples of F. Baur, who regards the text "Many of the called, but few of the chosen," quoted in the Epistle of Barnabas (4:14) as a text taken, not from Matt. 20:6 and *22*:14, but from the Fourth Book of Esdras (8:3), where we read: "Many have been created, but few will be saved." The thought is far from being the same.

[757] *In Isaiam,* I, 18.

[758] This is the opinion of Eusebius, *H. E.,* IV, *22.*

written," "It is written in the memoirs of the Apostles," "the Apostles wrote," which are usual with him when he quotes from the true Gospels. It is quite possible that these details were supplied by oral tradition, which was not yet extinct in his time, or taken from some written sources that have since disappeared.[759]

The argument from a few quotations which some Fathers of the second century extracted from apocryphal books in nowise lessens the worth of the testimony which those illustrious doctors offer to the authenticity of the Gospels. As has been fittingly said, "The unique position accorded to the Four Gospels at the close of the second century in the larger part of the Church, the confidence with which they were regarded as alone undoubtedly authentic, the ease with which in course of time this view obtained universal acceptance, were the natural sequel both of their history and of that of other [apocryphal] works of the same character. None of the latter, it appears, ever were serious rivals of the Four in the affections of the great Churches of Greek and Latin Christendom." [760] Nor was there ever the least hesitation as to their number. This proves that there was never a period during which our four Gospels and the apocryphal writings of the same sort were more or less confused.

III. The Authenticity of the Gospels and the Critics

In the two special studies mentioned in our Preface [761] we endeavored to analyze and describe the stubborn efforts, partly underground and partly open, made by Rationalists of every

[759] See Balden, *Das Verhältnis Justins des Martyrers zu unseren Evangelien*, 1895.

[760] Stanton, *op. cit.*, pp. 269 f.

[761] *L'Évangile Mutilé et Dénaturé par les Rationalistes Contemporains*, 1910; *Les Étapes du Rationalisme dans ses Attaques contre les Évangiles et la Vie de N.-S. Jésus-Christ*, 1911.

category for well-nigh a hundred and fifty years with a view to destroying the authority of the Gospels at any price. We beg leave to refer the reader to those little volumes. Here it will suffice to note a few particular objections selected from those which are to-day most frequently urged against the Apostolic origin of the Gospels.

1. The first is of a general character. These writings, it is said, were not composed each as a whole, but at various times and by successive authors, each of whom added a new layer of narratives. Finally came an "editor," who gave to each Gospel its present form. Sometimes this scheme is simplified by admitting only two authors, or at least two principal authors. Thus, with regard to the Second Gospel, the critics distinguish between proto-Mark and deutero-Mark.[762] But more usually they increase the number of "layers" in question. Ewald, a German critic of the latter half of the nineteenth century, pretended to trace nine distinct documents underlying the Gospel of St. Matthew, and thought himself clever enough to distinguish and reconstruct each of them.[763]

Pushed thus far, the theory refutes itself; for how would it be possible, even for the keenest mind, after so many centuries, to perform with any degree of success such a dissection if the elements to be separated had really been welded together? But the theory is equally weak in its more moderate form.[764] The best weapon for upsetting it is to be found in the unshakable testimony of tradition, on which we have purposely insisted and against which these arbitrary, mutually destructive hypotheses break, each critic seeking to present his own personal system. We should never weary of repeating that the publication of a book is a fact of history, and that the existence of a historical fact, when it goes back to a distant epoch, is

[762] That is, the "first" Mark and the "second" Mark.

[763] See Fillion, *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles,* pp. 135–137.

[764] Such, for example, as described by Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 36.

proved mostly by the testimony of tradition. Numerous witnesses, honest and learned, attest the authenticity of the Gospels, and they deserve our full credence.

And here again the intrinsic argument joins with tradition in contradicting the Rationalist assertion. In fact, in each of our Gospels there reigns a wonderful unity of content as well as of form. From end to end their special character, their tendency and aim, their style with its peculiarities, remain the same, and it is impossible to discover any real line of cleavage. St. Matthew does not for a single instant cease describing Jesus as the promised Messias; St. Mark shows us the Savior hastening, so to speak, from one miracle to another, from one act of kindness to another; St. Luke constantly places before us the gentle image of the Son of Man, coming to redeem us by making Himself like to us, and never tiring in His quest of the lost sheep; in St. John's Gospel we constantly behold the Incarnate Word, the Son of God, who proves His divinity by His words and deeds, surrounded by friends whose number and devotedness keep growing, and striving with enemies bent more and more upon His destruction. The same thing is true of the language peculiar to each of the Evangelists. From the first chapter to the last St. Matthew,—we purposely cite small peculiarities, which are especially significant in this matter,—sticks to his transitional formula, "And behold";[765] St. Mark, to his "And immediately"; St. Luke, to his compound verbs, expressing delicate shades of thought; St. John, to his *paratactic* arrangement of short sentences following one another without connectives. Like Christ's garment, our Gospels are seamless.

[765] Albert Réville, a Liberal Protestant, says regarding the First Gospel: "These favorite contextures are interwoven through the whole book, forming a net-work evidently stretched by one and the same hand; these special modes of expression, which are to be found uniformly in the course of the writing, testify to the unity of authorship."

Each of them was evidently written by one and the same hand.[766]

2. As regards the First Gospel and its origin, a false interpretation has been given to an expression of Papias, a Christian writer of the early second century, whom we mentioned above as a witness of the authenticity of the Gospels. In a work entitled "Explanations of the Sayings of the Lord,"[767] preserved only in a few fragments by Eusebius of Caesarea, the Bishop of Hierapolis said: "Matthew wrote the *Logia* of Jesus in the Hebrew tongue."[768] For a long time no one thought of attaching any special importance to this use of the word *Logia* by Papias; but the Rationalist critics thought they could cite it as an argument against the authenticity of St. Matthew's Gospel. According to them this substantive does not designate our First Gospel in its present form, but a simple collection of sayings and discourses of the Lord, gathered by St. Matthew, and later on supplemented by some unknown *redactor*.

But this argumentation has no foundation in fact. That in Papias' mind the *Logia* of St. Matthew did not contain exclusively sayings, but also related events, is proved by the fact that in his "Explanations of the Sayings of the Lord," mentioned above, this same author inserted accounts of miracles and other incidents, as appears from the fragments quoted by Eusebius. Moreover, just before speaking of St. Matthew, Papias mentions the Gospel of St. Mark, affirms that it contains "words and deeds" of Christ,[769] and designates it as a collection of *Logia:* whence it conclusively follows that this word, in Papias' use of it, stood for deeds as

[766] We do not mean that such little glosses could not, in course of time, have slipped into the text. An undoubted case is the note (John 21:24) added by the "ancients" of Ephesus. But they are rare.

[767] In Greek: *Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις.*

[768] Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, 39.

[769] *Λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα.*

well as sayings. Furthermore, St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen likewise give the names *Logia of the Lord* to the four Gospels, such as we possess them to-day, consisting of a mixture of deeds and discourses. And then, supposing that St. Matthew was really the author of a similar collection, how does it happen that so important a work disappeared without leaving the slightest trace and without any of the ecclesiastical writers, those eager searchers of the earliest Christian monuments, having become acquainted with it? [770] Let us conclude by saying that the Rationalist interpretation of Papias' remark is false and the use which that holy Bishop made of the word *Logia* is perfectly legitimate: first, because this term is employed in the same sense in the New Testament,[771] and also because of the particular care with which Papias searched for sayings of the Divine Master, as Eusebius reports.

This same text of Papias, interpreted by the critics in the sense just indicated, gave birth to a somewhat recent hypothesis that promptly won many supporters. It is called "the theory of the two sources" on account of the two chief documents by means of which it claims to be able to solve the Synoptic problem. The first of these sources, particularly for the deeds, is supposed to be the Gospel of St. Mark, which, according to this theory, was the first to appear and on which St. Matthew and St. Luke drew abundantly. The supposed collection of *Logia* forms the second source, which, they say, supplied those same Evangelists with the sayings and discourses of the Savior, along with differentiations which are explained by the degree and manner of use they made of them.

[770] But this has not prevented several Liberal critics from attempting its reconstruction, which, after what we have just said, evidently offers no real guaranty. See Resch, *Die Logia Jesu nach dem griechischen und hebräischen Text wiederhergestellt*, 1898; Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu, die zweite Quelle des Matthäus und Lukas*, 1907.

[771] Cfr. Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12.

But many weighty circumstances cry out against this theory. In the first place, it is in total disagreement with tradition, which expressly attributes the first place chronologically to St. Matthew's Gospel, and the second place to St. Mark's. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the early doctors, to whom we owe this information, did not decide the matter carelessly, but with full knowledge of the case and after serious inquiry. In the second place, the followers of this hypothesis give to the word *Logia* a meaning that it does not possess, as we have just shown. One of the two sources on which they count in all probability never existed. Lastly,—and this remark brings us back to tradition,—if the theory in question accords St. Matthew the very secondary honor of having composed the pretended collection, it takes from him the much greater honor of being the author of the Gospel that bears his name. This being the case, we can understand why the Biblical Commission has forbidden Catholic scholars to adopt this hypothesis.[772]

IV. The Fourth Gospel and the Sophisms of the Rationalists

The Rationalist attack on the authenticity of the Third Gospel offers no special interest. We have seen that a number of neo-critics,—Dr. A. Harnack among them,—admit that this Gospel was composed by St. Luke. But the Fourth Gospel has since the end of the seventeenth century been incessantly subjected to violent assaults.[773] A certain commentator, who is also a Christian believer, has described in a few interesting lines the mixture of love and hatred which has been the lot of this Gospel, so unique of its kind: "The Fourth Gospel has been at once highly praised and sharply attacked. It is the spiritual Gospel, said Clement of Alexandria; it is

[772] See its decision of June 26, 1912.

[773] See a brief account of this strife in Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Jean,* pp. xxxiii–xxxvi, and *Les Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 143–151.

a mixture of paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, replies Evanson. It holds first place among the Gospels, it is a unique and perfect book, said Luther; it is a worthless production and of no use to our age, replies the Lutheran Vogel. It is the heart of Christ, said Ernesti; it is a perplexing mystical work, a dilution, a nebula, answer other authors. It is the least authorized of the Gospels, a decidedly inferior work, say contemporary Rationalists, while, since the time of St. Irenaeus, it has been regarded by all sons of the Holy Spirit as the crown of the Apostolic Gospels." [774]

It is not hard to understand the love with which believing souls have constantly surrounded this wonderful work. As for the hostility of unbelievers, that, too, is readily explained. Those who do not wish at any price to accept our Lord's divinity, reject with special vehemence this Gospel, wherein it shines so brightly.[775] Let us not forget that it is mostly *a priori* considerations and anti-dogmatic prejudices that have stirred up the hostility to this book.

1. What solid reasons can be alleged, not merely against the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, but also to date its composition at the end of the second century? In perusing the writings of the earliest Christian doctors, we observe that, from the viewpoint of Apostolic origin, they know no difference between this Gospel and the preceding three. For the Gospel of St. John, as for those of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, allusions, reminiscences, and indirect quotations abound in the Apostolic Fathers. Later on we have the direct testimony, as explicit as could be desired, of Irenaeus,

[774] J. P. Lange, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes,* p. 19.

[775] Otto Schmiedel, an adept of the negative school, makes this frank avowal on the subject (*Die Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-Forschung,* 2d ed., p. 17): "It is not surprising [that we reject this book], for with it is connected the contest regarding the divinity of Christ." In France the bitterest opponents of St. John's Gospel are Jean Réville, *Le Quatrième Évangile, son Origine et sa Valeur Historique,* 1900, and A. Loisy, *Le Quatrième Évangile,* 1903.

Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, the Canon of Muratori, and many others. Eusebius of Caesarea, who had acquired an extraordinary knowledge of the history of the primitive Church, who minutely examined and studied all the early documents, who quotes numerous fragments of works that have disappeared, and who sets down with conscientious fidelity the results of his researches, found nothing to allege against the authenticity of the Johannine Gospel, except a certain difference of opinion which is of no importance.[776] This book, he says, is a ὁμολογούμενον, it is universally received, and hence should be admitted without hesitation, for it is "known in all the churches that are under heaven." [777] The heterodox tradition, which represents the Judaizers, the Gnostics (Basilides, Valentinus, Heracleon, etc.), and the pagans (Celsus), is no less favorable to St. John than to the Synoptics, and uses the Fourth Gospel as an Apostolic work. In fact, it has been said that "there is not a single work of an ancient pagan author for the authenticity of which can be advanced one-fifth of the proofs which we have for St. John's Gospel." [778]

But most of our opponents refuse to apply to this Gospel the principles that govern literary criticism. According to them, the many evidences of tradition are insufficient, first, because there is lacking a favorable voice, which they claim to be essential, and also because, in the second century, several unfavorable voices are heard. This attitude is a curious phenomenon which reveals the inner dispositions of the Rationalist critics and the necessity in which they find themselves more than once of having recourse to faulty proofs. Papias affirms the authenticity of the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, but these critics refuse to accept his testimony or interpret it falsely; on the other hand they affect to

[776] It is about the *Alogi*, of whom we will speak later.
[777] *H. E.*, III, 24.
[778] Sadler, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1882, p. xxv.

consider that this same testimony is lacking for the Fourth Gospel and claim it to be indispensable. But the argument from silence is worthless on this point, since we have so many other witnesses; nor is it quite exact to say that Papias is altogether silent on the subject of the Fourth Gospel. In his "Explanations of the Discourses of the Lord," mentioned above, there are manifest allusions to St. John's work.[779] True, the Gnostc Marcion and the small and obscure sect of Alogi or Aloges in the second century [780] did not accept the Fourth Gospel, but their rejection of it was dictated by interested motives, for St. John had explicitly condemned the doctrine of those heretics. Tertullian [781] openly reproaches Marcion for this. Moreover, in attributing the composition of this Gospel to Cerinthus, for whom Christ was a mere mortal, the son of Joseph and Mary, the Alogi recognized its great antiquity, as Cerinthus was a contemporary of St. John the Apostle.

2. To refute the intrinsic proofs of authenticity, which have been mentioned above, the critics offer others which, they say, take away their whole force. They base their argument particularly on the perpetual and irreconcilable differences that are said to exist between the Fourth Gospel and the three others and also on the character of Christ's words as reported by St. John.

a) The independence which the author of the Fourth Gospel shows towards his three predecessors is too evident for anyone to deny it. We have already noted the divergences in content and form which divide our canonical Gospels into two distinct groups; it is enough merely to turn over the pages of a Gospel harmony to notice that, in our Lord's pub-

[779] See Zahn, *Einleitung in das N. T.*, II, 457 f., and *Geschichte des neutest. Kanons*, I, 902.

[780] Cfr. St. Epiphanius, *Haer.*, LI, 3; see also St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, III, xi, 9.

[781] *Adv. Marcion.*, IV, 3.

lic life, that is, in the principal part of the Gospel narratives, the passages which St. John has in common with the Synoptics are somewhat rare.[782] This phenomenon, mentioned again and again by the Fathers,[783] we described thus: "Nearly everything is new [in the Fourth Gospel]: special journeys to Judea and Jerusalem on the occasion of the principal religious feasts; very few events, but many discourses not found elsewhere; these events, themselves new, while episodes of the greatest interest and seemingly of the utmost importance, are passed over in silence. . . . A very different view of the acts and teaching of Jesus . . . In short, the manner of treatment is no longer the same." [784]

The divergences are quite real and almost continual; but the mistake of the critics consists in regarding them as contradictions. In many excellent Lives of Our Lord, composed by Protestant as well as by Catholic writers,[785] the new elements which we owe to St. John are combined and dovetailed without difficulty with the accounts of the Synoptics. The true reason for this notable difference in the materials employed was recognized long ago. As St. John wrote many years after the other Evangelists, he did not deem it either necessary or useful to set forth the same facts as his predecessors, but very rightly considered it more important to add new details.[786] Hence he prefers to show us the Savior as exercising His ministry, not in Galilee, but in Jerusalem and Judea.

[782] They are limited to the following three events: the first multiplication of the loaves, John 6:1–13 (cfr. Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17); Christ's walking on the water, John 6:15–21 (cfr. Matt. 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52); the anointing by Mary, John 12:1–8 (cfr. Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9. For our Lord's sufferings, the agreements are much more numerous.

[783] See Clement of Alexandria in Eusebius, *H. E.*, VI, 14; St. Jerome, *Contr. Iovin.*, I; St. Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelist.*, I, 5.

[784] Fillion, *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles*, p. 54.

[785] We have already mentioned those of Abbé Fouard, Bishop Le Camus, and Father Didon, which have won universal esteem.

[786] "In fact, we admit that the author of the Fourth Gospel is addressing

Neither he nor the Synoptics wished to write a complete biography of Jesus. They had, therefore, every right to choose, as in reality they did, the features that best fitted their particular aim. The Synoptics themselves differ not a little from one another; many an account in St. Luke has no parallel in St. Matthew and St. Mark, and *vice versa*. Yet their authenticity is nowise doubtful.

Notwithstanding all these differences, it is quite the same life, the same ministry of Christ that we find described in the four Gospel accounts and the order is identical. In the Gospel according to St. John, as in the other three, Christ announces the Kingdom of God, gathers about Him disciples whom He prepares for their future mission and at the head of whom He places Simon Peter; He traverses Palestine with them, preaching and performing miracles. Anyone who will study the Johannine Gospel will notice that its author was acquainted with the Synoptics, whose writings he often presupposes. Thus, from the famous text, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (*John* 1:14), it follows that the readers were familiar with the mystery of the Incarnation. The testimony of the Baptist (*John* 2:32) bears witness to the Baptism of Christ. The words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (*John* 2:19), are confirmed by St. Mark (14:58; 15:29). St. John does not relate the institution of the Eucharist, but he sets forth at great length the promise which Christ made a year before His death, of giving the world this august sacrament (*John* 6:48–59). Furthermore, especially in what concerns the thoughts, imagery, comparisons, and even language, between the two Gospel groups there exist frequent coincidences, thus attesting the

readers who were supposed to be acquainted with Christ's history in its general and essential features, so that he had no need to relate it again with all its details." This is a very loyal statement from the pen of Reuss, *La Théologie Johannique*, p. 52.

general oneness of their views and their aim. These have often been noted by commentators who are believing Christians.[787]

b) Whoever is not imbued with dogmatic prejudices easily comes to recognize in the Fourth Gospel, as in the other three, the same Jesus-Messias, the same God made man, presented under different aspects. This outward difference of aspect has been compared to that which exists in the features of Socrates, according to Plato's writings and those of Xenophon. Xenophon depicts his hero's practical activity, whereas Plato traces his philosophical speculation; similarly St. John describes the higher being in Christ, whereas the Synoptics rather insist on the outward facts of His life. Clement of Alexandria expresses this difference by two epithets that aptly characterize the double aspect which the portrait of Christ presents in each of the Gospel groups. He says: "The other Gospels contain especially the external things [literally, the bodily things[788]] of Christ":[789] they view Him rather by His externals. St. John, on the contrary, gives us a "spiritual Gospel," [790] which reveals Jesus to us according to His inmost nature. In these sublime pages while living and real, the Divine Master has an ideal touch which charms the soul. His divinity appears with a marvelous brightness, but His humanity is no less clearly affirmed. He is subject to fatigue (4:6), He experiences thirst (4:7; 19:28) and indignation (2:13–17, etc.); He has His friends, whom He loves tenderly (11:5; 13:23); He weeps and groans (11:33), is troubled (11:38), and a score of other instances similar to those which the Synoptics mention. The portrait of Christ is essentially the same in all four Gospels.

[787] See Fillion, *Introduction Générale aux Évangiles,* pp. 59–61; Belser, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 1901, pp. 288–296; Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 1899, II, 498–527, etc.

[788] Τὰ σωματικά.

[789] In Eusebius, *H. E.,* VI, 14.

[790] Πνευματικὸν εὐαγγέλιον.

c) The authenticity of the Johannine Gospel has been called in question on account of the long discourses which it attributes to our Lord. It is true that by their solemn, metaphysical, and uniform character they are a contrast to Christ's words, so simple, varied, and vigorous, so rich in figures, as recorded in the first three Gospels. How, we are asked, could one of Christ's immediate disciples, after many years, remember those theological monologues? And besides, the style is the same for Christ's words as for those of John the Baptist, the same also as in the First Epistle of St. John.

To these objections we can make several replies: (1) It is true that in St. John's Gospel the Savior's words have a particular stamp, an abstract and sententious quality which, at first glance, makes them more difficult to understand. But this difference of tone and language is partly explained by the difference in His audience. Here Jesus is not addressing Himself to the common people, to the simple Galileans, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their religious leaders; hence He treats of loftier subjects and employs a more doctrinal style. Further, to overcome the deep-seated opposition which was made against Him in the hierarchical centers of the capital, He had to insist on the proofs of His mission and divinity. (2) It has been truly said that "the discourses of the Fourth Gospel are not like a photograph, but like the juice extracted from a tasty fruit." [791] They are evidently *résumés* or summaries. Yet these summaries contain the pith of Our Lord's thoughts, and even His principal expressions. The Orientals are justly famous for their memory. Was it, then, so hard for St. John to preserve in his deep soul a few discourses of remarkable substance and form, delivered in his presence by his beloved Master,—discourses to which he constantly reverted in his meditations and preaching? (3) That the style of these dis-

[791] F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean*, 2d ed., I, 165.

courses is almost uniform can be easily explained. As a result of frequently dwelling on the words and discourses of Jesus, St. John gives them more or less the coloring of his own personal style. But, "from the fact of a modification in the outward form of the substance,[792] it does not follow that the slightest foreign element was mingled with the latter."[793] (4) In the Savior's words as preserved by the Synoptics, we find ideas identical with those contained in the discourses of the Fourth Gospel. There as here, Jesus refers everything to His own person and to the attitude that men adopt towards Him; He requires a complete though enlightened faith.[794] On the one hand, the Synoptics mention several sublime and majestic assertions of the Divine Master, which might well find a place in the Fourth Gospel[795] and, on the other hand, St. John quotes simple and popular sayings of Christ which recall the language He uses in the Synoptics.[796]

Let us conclude this discussion by calling to mind St. Irenaeus' remark on the subject of the "tetramorphous Gospel." There is only one Gospel history, only one Gospel, although that history and that Gospel first appeared in a fourfold form. And let us note, in fine, that in opposition to the invincible proof furnished by tradition, as also to the excellent argument which the intrinsic study of St. John's work provides, the critics have nothing to offer but sophisms. Here, as in many similar cases, they have transformed a question of literary criticism into a question of dogma; and consequently "their verdict as to the Fourth Gospel is determined beforehand,"[797] it is a matter on which their minds were

[792] We must avoid exaggerating the extent of these changes.

[793] Godet, *loc. cit.*

[794] Cfr. Matt. 11:6 and Luke 7:23; Matt. 12:30–33 and Mark 3:29; Matt. 13:16; 16:17, 25, etc.

[795] Especially Matt. 10:32 f.; 11:25–30.

[796] Cfr. 3:51, and particularly the meeting with the Samaritan woman, 4:1–26.

[797] W. Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 29.

made up from the start. At the present time, however, several members of the liberal school, less blinded by prejudices and enlightened by more conscientious research, acknowledge that a considerable part of the Fourth Gospel was written by St. John.[798] Then, too, a fairly large number of Protestant critics and several Rationalists admit the Apostolic origin of the book.[799]

V. Date of Composition of the Four Gospels

During the second half of the nineteenth century, especially under the baneful influence of Ferdinand Christian Baur and his school,[800] it was the fashion to set remarkably late dates for the composition of the Gospels. According to many critics, none of them was published before the second century, and that of St. John appeared no earlier than A. D. 160 or even 170. When hard pressed by the conservative exegetes and constrained to accept the testimony of tradition on certain points, the liberal Protestants little by little had to give up these dates, which have been justly called "extravagant," [801] and to replace them by more reasonable ones. Nevertheless, some of these critics,[802] if they would engage in truly scien-

[798] See our *Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 149–151. The thesis of the authenticity has recently been well set forth by Lepin, *L'Origine du Quatrième Évangile,* 1907, and by Camerlynck, *De Quarti Evangelii Auctore,* 1899.

[799] Among conservative Protestants: Th. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* II, 445–564, and *Das Evangelium des Johannes ausgelegt,* 1908, pp. 22–39; F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Saint Jean,* 2d ed., nearly all of Volume I; J. Bovon, *Théologie du Nouveau Testament,* 2d ed., I, 147–193; W. Sanday, *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel,* 1905. Among Liberal Protestants: Drummond, *An Inquiry into the Character and Authority of the Fourth Gospel,* 1903. We might cite many others by including earlier writers. See Fillion, *L'Évangile de Saint Jean, Introduction Critique et Commentaires,* pp. lx–lxii.

[800] It is known as the Tübingen school; see our *Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 95–110.

[801] G. Salmon, *Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament,* 9th ed., p. 107.

[802] We cite Burkitt, for example, who, in his work, *The Gospel History and its Transmission,* 3d ed., 1911, assigns the following dates to the Gospels: St.

tific criticism, would have to execute what Harnack aptly calls "a retrograde movement" that would take them back to tradition.[803]

VI. The Credibility of the Gospels

The early Rationalists assailed the credibility of the Gospels no less than their authenticity. Their successors, the neo-critics, apparently exercised greater moderation; but the final outcome is nearly the same, because the "historic nucleus"—this is the expression used—which they accept after suppressing[804] all that they arbitrarily regard as superadded, as poetic and legendary, as devoid of historical value, is extremely slender. In order to clear the way, so to speak, we will first reply to some secondary objections and then follow our opponents on the principal field of their attacks.

a) Simply as a matter of record, we cite the assertion that the loyalty which the Evangelists professed for Christ was harmful to their impartiality. This is a sophism, pure and simple. At that rate, never would a friend be worthy of belief when he testifies in favor of his friend. We have proved that the authors of the Gospels are impartial historians and that they depict a Jesus who is not only living, but very real.[805]

Matthew, between 90 and 110; St. Mark, between 70 and 80; St. Luke, about 100; St. John, between 100 and 110.

[803] Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius,* I, ix–xx, among other things says (p. xii): "The chronological framework in which tradition coördinated the sources is exact on all the principal points, from Paul's Epistles to the writings of Irenaeus; the historian is obliged to take no account of all the hypotheses which deny that framework." According to his *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien,* 1911, pp. 81–95, the Gospel of St. Luke was composed before the year 64; that of St. Mark a little later; that of St. Matthew, perhaps before 70, or shortly after. This last date does not agree with tradition, which, as a whole, gives St. Matthew's Gospel the first place in chronological order.

[804] "Peeled off" (*herausgeschält*), as they say with very doubtful taste.

[805] Burkitt, so often hostile to the Gospels, writes (*The Gospel History and*

b) The objection drawn from differences of detail to be met with here and there in the Gospel accounts [806] is no harder to dispose of. The reply which St. John Chrysostom gave long ago has lost none of its force: "What then? Is not one Evangelist enough to tell it all?—Yes, a single one would be enough; but when there are four of them, who are neither of the same time nor the same place, who did not meet together nor agree together, yet speak by the same mouth, the result is a far greater proof for their credibility.—But, we are told, the facts are quite to the contrary; many passages show differences in wording. This is still another proof of their credibility, for if they were in exact accord as to time and place, and even the form of expression, our opponents would never believe that they wrote without a previous understanding, without a purely human agreement. Such accord could not be without premeditation. But the apparent contradiction in a few small details protects them from such a suspicion and is the finest defense of these historians. When they differ slightly (with regard to time or place or in other similar details), this fact offers no difficulty for the truth of the thing itself." [807] The difficulty is, in fact, so very small that present-day critics no longer insist on this point.[808]

c) To-day no one, even among the most ardent liberal theologians, would think of accusing St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, or St. John, much less Our Lord Jesus Christ

its Transmission, 2d ed., p. 22): "Put very shortly, I think we may say that a true impression is on the whole and for most people better conveyed by a friend than by an observer wholly dispassionate."

[806] We cite, for example, those concerning the number of the demoniacs of Gerasa (Matt. 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39), and the number of the blind men of Jericho (Matt. 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43).

[807] *Hom. In Matt., Proem.,* I, 2.

[808] The Gospel commentators point out all these divergences and offer most reasonable explanations of them. See St. Augustine's work, *De Consensu Evangelistarum.*

Himself, of knowingly practicing fraud, as Reimarus did in his day.[809] On the contrary, the neo-critics generally admit the honesty of the Hero and His biographers. The Evangelists, they say, were convinced of the truth of their accounts; but, without in the least wishing to deceive their readers, they were themselves the victims of an unfortunate illusion, the cause of which we must seek in their religious enthusiasm and their credulousness. Hence these poetic fictions, these legends, and myths,[810] which, we are told, infiltrated themselves into their accounts.

We will first make a general reply, which will also fit the other objections to be considered below. The learned Father Vigouroux, who, in his long strife with the adversaries of the Bible, was noted for his great moderation, was unable to refrain from making a vigorous protest when Renan brought up this same difficulty. "That is false," he says; "it is pure invention [811] . . . We wonder how they dare make such serious charges when they have no support for them except hypotheses that are without any real foundation and that the accuser himself can regard only as mere assumptions." [812] For the most part, the Rationalist critics succeeding Strauss and Renan have recourse to the same easy procedure, *viz.:* of affirming and denying without foundation. Catholic exegetes must not weary of protesting against such an arbitrary proceeding." [813]

[809] See our *Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 9–19.

[810] This word recalls Strauss' famous explanation, according to which numerous Gospel incidents, particularly those in which there is a question of miracles or other supernatural facts, owe their origin to myths, that is, to ideas transformed into imaginary facts. See our *Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 55–84. While condemning this theory as a whole, most Liberal theologians apply it to various details of the Gospel, which they can not rid themselves of by other means.

[811] *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., V, 264.

[812] *Op. cit.,* p. 268.

[813] In a special work on the historical value of St. Mark's Gospel (*Der historische Wert der ältesten Uberlieferung von der Geschichte Jesu,* 1905, p. x), Zimmermann expresses the same thought as Vigouroux, declaring that he does

Now let us return to the objection. The critics acknowledge that the Evangelists did not intend to deceive. But they charge the sacred writers with letting themselves be deceived, with unwittingly taking fiction for reality, with materializing poetry and transforming legends into real facts. But we ask: Was it possible for them to fall into so gross an error, which in the final analysis would consist in mistaking an ordinary Jew for the Messias, for the Son of God? Neither St. Matthew, nor St. Peter and St. Mark, nor St. Paul and St. Luke, nor St. John was a simple-minded, gullible ignoramus. They were, as their writings prove, intelligent men who were thoroughly acquainted, by personal experience or through the intermediary of reliable witnesses, with the events which they narrate. What they tell did not take place "in a corner," to use St. Paul's expressive words,[814] but in sight of a whole country. The Evangelists, therefore, could not have fallen into error on this point, and the proofs we have given of their truthfulness remain whole and entire, notwithstanding the arbitrary assertions and conjectures that have been made to demolish them. Moreover, since legends and myths and idealizations are spoken of, it is generally admitted that a fairly notable time is required for such fictions to assume shape and form. But the first Gospels were published a few years after Our Lord's death. Before they were written, the oral tradition, which they reproduce in its *ensemble,* was almost stereotyped, and neither pastors nor the faithful would have tolerated its purity being impaired, whether knowingly or unwittingly. The critics too easily forget certain facts of history which run counter to their contentions. Yet they ought to know, as the apologist Qua-

not consider himself obliged to follow the Liberal theologians' arbitrary criticism in all its meanderings. He says: "After all, the obligation of proving the assertions and hypotheses falls upon those who attack the credibility and authenticity of the Gospel narratives."

[814] Acts 26:26.

dratus [815] points out, that some of the sick cured by Our Lord were still living at the beginning of the second century and that, according to St. Hegesippus,[816] at that same period could be seen in Jerusalem certain disciples "who had heard the divine Wisdom with their own ears." It is undeniable, according to these data, that witnesses of Christ's life must have been still numerous when the Gospels were written. Their presence made the creation of legends and the formation of myths impossible.

d) Let us pass on to the chief objection which contemporary Rationalism brings against the credibility of the Gospels. It is an objection which, if it were well founded, would throw these holy Books into the class of "second-rate" or "second-hand" documents, so that we could no longer look upon them as historical sources, but merely as "edifying books" and "doctrinal writings." At one time Baur and his followers invented the theory of "tendencies," which soon went out of style.[817] At present there is the theory of "influences" which are said to have made themselves felt upon the Evangelists in such wise as to render them historians who are not very reliable. The most harmful of all these influences would have been that of faith, which, by making Jesus the Messias and the Son of God, necessarily transformed most of the events of His life.

The most conspicuous critics never tire of referring to this pretended influence. Recently one of them [818] wrote that "the Gospels are evidences of their authors' faith in Jesus . . . They are the product of an enthusiasm full of faith. The Evangelists believed in a glorified Jesus and wove into the picture of the earthly Jesus many a golden

[815] In Eusebius, *H. E.*, IV, 3. See also the recently discovered fragment of Papias, in *Texte und Untersuchungen* by Gebhardt and Harnack, V, 167–184.
[816] In Eusebius, *H. E.*, III, 32.
[817] Fillion, *Les Étapes du Rationalisme*, pp. 95–108.
[818] Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, I, 29.

thread taken from the splendor of the earthly Christ."[819] To render their notion more complete and striking, these theologians have established in the Gospel narratives a distinction between what they call the "Jesus of faith" and the "Christ of history," or the "dogmatic Christ" and the "historical Jesus": the latter, real and veritable; the former, without objective reality, an adulterated product of the erroneous beliefs of the primitive Church. And it is precisely this dogmatic Christ, they say, whose portrait the Evangelists depict. To put an end to an error that has lasted too long, the critics therefore set out, as they boast,[820] "to discover the true Jesus," and they congratulate themselves upon having "recently recovered Him."[821] To attain this result they have been obliged to cut and curtail on every page, after making what they have the effrontery to call "a chemical analysis" of the documents.[822] Thus they think they have separated the parts, on one side the "truth," on the other the "poetry"; on one side the Jesus of history, on the other the Christ of faith.

It is a result at which we have a right to be surprised and which is not to the credit of the authors and abettors of this theory. That will be our first reply. We have admired the image which the Gospels draw of Our Lord: a simple and living image, one of perfect unity in the four portraits we possess of it. But the critics hold up to us "an image without strength or vigor, a vague and bloodless form,"[823] a real caricature. It is vain for our adversaries to say that Jesus cannot be comprehended otherwise than as He is described

[819] Weiss wrote a little volume in which he develops this sophism: *Christus, die Anfänge des Dogmas,* 1909. See also Wernle, *Quellen des Lebens Jesu,* p. 83. On the subject of Loisy, see Lepin, *Christologie,* 1908, pp. 9–19.

[820] Cfr. A. Neumann, *Jesu, wer er geschichtlich war.*

[821] H. Weinel, *Jesus im neunzehnten Jahrhundert,* 1903, p. 19.

[822] Mehlhorn, *Wahrheit und Dichtung in den Evangelien,* 1906, p. 2.

[823] Kögel, *Probleme der Geschichte Jesu und die moderne Kritik,* 1906, p. 169.

in the Gospels and throughout the New Testament. To strip Him of the supernatural element is to disfigure Him, taking from Him His essential features. And what is the veritable historical Jesus after they have removed the ornaments, as they say, with which faith has encumbered Him? Each of our critics gives Him different traits, oftentimes opposite ones; and this circumstance leads one of their opponents to say: "Jesus becomes for Protestant theology a receptacle into which each theologian pours the contents of his own mind." [824] It is not the Evangelists, therefore, but the Rationalists of our day, who place before our eyes the image of a false Jesus.

The Evangelists were men of faith and under the impulse of faith wrote that abridged history of the Savior which the first Christians knew. All of them believed in Christ's Messianic character, His mission of redemption, and His divine nature. Do they for this reason lose all right to our confidence? We again appeal to the proofs of veracity which their accounts show. In itself, faith is no more incompatible than friendship with the office of a sincere and truthful historian. And has not this faith, which for eighteen centuries has been that of millions of souls, among whom are reckoned many martyrs, great saints and scholars, received the most brilliant confirmation by all that has happened since Christ's Resurrection? Our Lord has given ample proof of His mission and His divine nature, and He has demonstrated the truthfulness of the Evangelists. Not in these latter do we find party spirit, prejudice, or a begging of the question, but in the critics who unfairly hurl stones at them. One of their own number, who, after forsaking their theory, was most forward in denying it, with biting sarcasm taunts them with their illogical procedure: "They are obliged to eliminate from the New Testament everything that does not agree

[824] Kalthoff, *Das Christus-Problem*, 1903, p. 21.

with their theological system, and this method they call, *applying historical criticism!* . . . After that amputation, there is nothing real left, and they are free to create what they please to call the *Gospel,*" namely, their own false Gospel.[825] They are the ones, consequently, who let themselves be drawn into error by the influence of faith, a faith which has no other foundation than an unscientific prepossession.

As to the distinction they would like to make between the so-called "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of dogma," it is utterly impossible. "It corresponds in no way to the facts and so is unable to withstand a serious examination,[826] since the genuine and duly accredited Gospel history proves that there never was the least difference between Jesus and the Christ . . . or, as certain writers have crudely ventured to say, between the man Jesus and Christ, the Son of God." [827] Nowhere in the Sacred Books is Jesus what this "critical" theology would make of Him, namely, a simple man. It is "the Christ of faith" that is historical; the other is not and never was. The Jesus of the Gospels is not the work or invention of faith; on the contrary, Christian faith is His wonderful work.

From these considerations we are able to conclude that by themselves faith and historical accuracy are nowise opposed to each other.

e) The supernatural fills the life of Christ; it is the element in which He is wholly immersed, from His virginal conception to the Ascension. But Rationalists will have none of this element at any price, for they consider it the principal misdeed of faith. They vie in repeating that the supernatural

[825] Kalthoff, *Was wissen wir von Jesus?* 1904, p. 4.

[826] It has been well said that we might as well try to draw a distinction between Bonaparte and Napoleon.

[827] Fillion, *L'Évangile Mutilé,* p. 12.

does not exist, and the Catholic Church does not stick more strongly to its dogmas and the canons of its councils than they stick to this false principle. Consequently those Gospel accounts in which Jesus is presented to us in the light and atmosphere of the supernatural are mercilessly eliminated by the critics, as not worthy of credence, or they are explained in a purely natural manner. Independently of the great prodigies of our Lord's infancy, His Transfiguration, Resurrection, etc., of which we will speak at the proper time, there are two groups of facts—the application to Jesus of numerous Old Testament prophecies and His still more numerous miracles—which have been a particular object of attack by the Rationalists from the viewpoint of credibility.

f) The foregoing objections concern all the four Gospels in common, attacking their authenticity and integrity as well as their historical value. There remains for us to refute one more very special objection, which relates to the Gospel of St. John.

We said above that the critics have almost unanimously pronounced the death sentence on the Fourth Gospel, declaring that it is henceforth barred from "being reckoned among the historical documents of the life of Jesus." [828] One of their chief grievances is that the author of this Gospel did not intend to relate historic facts. He develops, they tell us, a theological thesis which regards Jesus as the Divine Word, the Son of God, and his whole exposition is falsified by this fixed idea. To strengthen his demonstration, this writer, or rather theologian, transforms events and, as it were, places them under a strange light. Throughout, in the facts,—which he made up, say some; which he took from the Synoptics, say others,—as also in the discourses, may be noticed the coloring of allegory and symbolism,—which plainly are not history.

In a learned work largely devoted to this question (with

[828] H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen im Leben Jesu*, 1904, p. 5.

the direct aim of refuting Loisy's errors) Abbé Lepin [829] follows St. John step by step and shows that the Rationalist hypothesis regarding the symbolism of the Fourth Gospel is contradicted all along by the accounts themselves—whether it be of deeds or discourses—as also by a minute comparison of them with the Synoptic documents. These accounts are not, as they would have us believe, "allegorical pictures directly symbolizing half-seen religious truth; mystical paintings, ideally representing the power, majesty, and divinity of the Incarnate Word"; [830] they are the pure and simple reality, presented under a particular form which corresponds to the author's contemplative nature and the apologetic purpose he had in view. The facts he sets forth, the persons he introduces, the numerous and minute details that he continually mentions, are all remarkably delicate, dramatic, and real. If the painting possesses something of the ideal, the likeness is none the less perfect. It is a history in flesh and blood which is spread out before us.

That there are allegorical or symbolic details here and there in the Fourth Gospel, its author himself takes pains to inform us. Thus for him the miracles of Christ are "signs." [831] After quoting Our Lord's words to the man born blind, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloe," he tells us that the word Siloe signifies "sent." [832] Further on,[833] we read that the Savior connected His anointment by Mary with His burial. After describing the circumstances under which Judas left the upper room to go and perpetrate his crime, the Evangelist adds this tragic reflection: "And it was night"; [834] night without, still darker night in the traitor's soul. But those are isolated cases, to

[829] *La Valeur Historique du Quatrième Évangile,* 2 vols., 1910.
[830] Lepin, *op. cit.,* I, 617.
[831] Fillion, *Les Miracles de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ,* I, 19 f.
[832] John 9:7.
[833] John 12:7.
[834] John 13:20.

which no great importance ought be attached. When the adversaries of the Fourth Gospel try to multiply such cases, they soon fall into strained interpretations.

Let us conclude with a consideration that has some weight. Those who at every step discover symbolism in the Fourth Gospel are nevertheless forced to admit that this book does contain some historical facts, notably those constituting the history of the Savior's Passion. But if everything preceding that history is symbolic, should not the author, for his readers' benefit, have indicated in some manner the point where the symbols stop and the facts begin? Yet he gives no indication of this sort. The narrative goes on uniformly without furnishing any light on this essential point. In that case the Fourth Gospel would be "a hybrid creature of the strangest species, in which two natures, the symbolic and the historical, conflict with and contradict each other . . . If the author had no other aim than to give body to some personal ideas, his work has failed clumsily, since he has piled on the historical coverings with so little cleverness that they have stifled his ideas." [835]

Let us bring this lengthy discussion to a close by recalling the popular maxim "gospel truth," [836] which indicates a perfect reality. Christians have at all times understood that the Gospels ought not and cannot contain anything but absolutely true facts, regarding which no distrust can reasonably be entertained. This maxim will ever continue to be exact, without anything to fear from the most skilful and violent attacks.

VII. The Messianic Expectation and Contemporary Judaism

We have already mentioned the double error of the Jews of old regarding the Messianic prophecies. The first, as a re-

[835] Keppler, *Die Komposition des Johannesevangeliums,* 1884, p. 110.
[836] Eph. 1 : 13, St. Paul calls the gospel of Christ, "the word of truth."

sult of an exaggeration, consisted in applying to the Messias numerous Biblical texts which can refer to Him only in a remote manner. But this error is not as bad as the second, which still further denatures and falsifies the meaning of the Messianic prophecies by making out that they picture a political and conquering Savior, such as national vanity and ambition desired.

If we ask the Jews of to-day what has become of the enthusiastic and often exorbitant expectation of their ancestors, what will most of them reply? One day as we were passing an Israelite's house just as he reached the door, his two daughters affectionately called out to him: "Father, we were waiting for you as for the Messias." "The Messias," he replied in a careless tone, "you will wait a long while for him." This was evidently but another way of saying that the Messias will never come. The sentiment of unbelief has invaded a considerable part of the Jewish nation, especially the comfortable, educated classes, which, while keeping up a more or less exact observance of a certain number of Pharisaic traditions, have been very deeply penetrated by Rationalism in the matter of their doctrinal beliefs. On the particular point we are now considering, this skepticism is easy to understand, since all the signs of the Messias' advent, which were so numerous and striking in Our Lord's time, have clearly been realized and the general date assigned by the prophets for His appearance has long ago expired.

We have before us several Jewish catechisms. What do they say about the Messias? The *Précis Élémentaire d'Instruction Religieuse et Morale pour les Jeunes Français Israélites* (Elementary Compendium of Religious and Moral Instruction for Young French Israelites), approved by the central consistory, says in the twelfth of a list of "Thirteen Articles of Faith": "God, at the time which He has pleased to determine and which He alone knows, will send us the Messias announced by

the prophets, who, with the assistance of the divine power, will bring about the triumph of the belief in God's unity and will cause war, vices, and all human afflictions to disappear from the earth." This is all that this Jewish catechism feels called upon to say about the great Liberator who fills the pages of the Old Testament and for so long aroused the holy desires of all Israel.

If we ask the theologians and exegetes of contemporary Judaism what is their belief on this point, we receive an equally unsatisfactory answer. Dr. Philippson, a rabbi highly esteemed by his coreligionists, has written a three-volume manual of theology, entitled, *Die israelitische Glaubenslehre,* which makes no mention of the Messias. In a tract intended for Israelitic youth,[837] the same author uses the word Messias, but in such a way as to show that whatever concerns that personage was the result of an enthusiasm which occasioned the ruin of the Jewish State. Professor Luzzato's *Lezione di Teologia Dogmatica Israelitica,*[838] a manual recommended among a great many others by Jews to those who desire to study their religious doctrine, is silent on the subject of the Messias. Charles Montefiore, the head of the liberal section of English Judaism, devotes a few pages to the subject in his *Outlines of Liberal Judaism,*[839] only to make this very frank avowal: "The personal Messias . . . is not believed in, or looked forward to, by Liberal Judaism . . . We no longer believe in or teach the literal accuracy of the Messianic predictions of the prophets." His grief over this negation is almost joyous. By way of compensation, as it were, he inculcates an earnest and firm belief in the perpetual, unlimited, universal progress of mankind, an intellectual, moral, and religious progress that will result in a brilliant golden age, that is, a time when no out-

[837] *Der Rat des Heils,* 1882.
[838] Published in 1882.
[839] Pp. 280, 315 f.

ward condition will hinder the honest laborer from obtaining education and happiness, a time when there will be no more sweatshops [840] or inadequate wages, when, so far as possible, there will be an equal opportunity for all. According to this writer's view, that is all the Messianic golden age will amount to—"so far as possible."

This renunciation of the Messias promised by the prophets, sometimes disguised, but often quite clearly stated, shows that modern Judaism has ended in a veritable religious bankruptcy [841] by eliminating one of the most essential articles of faith of the Jewish religion and transforming the Messianic hope into a simple process of evolution.

VIII. The Messianic Prophecies

By virtue of their denial of the supernatural order the Rationalist exegetes suppress, in the history of the Hebrew people as also in that of Christ and the Church, whatever transcends the powers of nature, prophecies as well as miracles, concluding that, even if the Israelites believed in a Messias, there were never any Messianic oracles in the sense maintained by Christian theology.

But they go still farther. They lay down another "rule of great significance," [842] which Harnack sums up in these words: "The conviction that the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the history of Jesus has had a disturbing effect on tradition." [843] In what does this disturbing effect consist? Persuaded that "ancient passages of Scripture were ful-

[840] In England and America this expressive term is used to designate the odious system of heartless and unscrupulous industrialists who make their workers labor at starvation wages.

[841] *Journal of Theological Studies,* June 1913, pp. 366–377.

[842] P. W. Schmiedel, *Die Person Jesu im Streite der Meinungen der Gegenwart,* p. 34.

[843] *Wesen des Christentums,* 1903, p. 13.

filled at every moment in the life of Our Lord," [844] primitive Christianity eagerly applied to Christ numerous passages of the Prophets, Psalms, and other Old Testament books, just as if they had been especially written for Him from the beginning. Then, too, with a desire to increase the fulfilled prophecies of this sort and thus procure more glory for Him whom they venerated and loved as their Founder, the early Christians attributed to Him, on the basis of other Scripture texts, words and deeds which are unhistorical. Our opponents coolly develop this grave assertion. Thus one of the best known of them says: [845] "The Gospel narrative is full of predictions . . . taken from the Old Testament . . . When Jesus died, primitive Christianity found comfort and light . . . in discovering that the sufferings and death of the Messias had been foretold in the Old Testament and consequently had been prepared long before by God . . . The Old Testament prophecies gave birth to a considerable number of facts of Gospel history, or at the very least enriched the incidents with new details." [846]

Articles in reviews [847] and special works have been composed to prove this thesis. Thus Dr. W. Brandt [848] says that all the Gospel details relating to the Savior's Passion and Resurrection which have any parallel in the Old Testament, should be eliminated without further inquiry, since they were added by the early Christians. The "rule" in question was not slow in finding its way into the popular manuals; it was really too tempting not to try to draw all possible advantage from it.

[844] Schmiedel, *loc. cit.*

[845] Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments,* I, 42 f., etc.

[846] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 2d ed., pp. 18 f., takes the same view.

[847] For example, that of Weidel, *Studien über den Einfluss des Weissagungsbeweises auf die evangelische Geschichte,* in *Studien und Kritiken,* 1910, pp. 83–109, 163–195.

[848] *Die evangelische Geschichte und der Ursprung des Christentums, auf Grund einer Kritik der Berichte über das Leiden und die Auferstehung Jesu,* 1893. In 1910 Dr. F. Feigel published a brochure entitled, *Der Einfluss des Weissagungsbeweises und anderer Motive auf die Leidensgeschichte; ein Beitrag zur Evangelienkritik.*

"When it was understood that Jesus was He that was to come (the Messias), the faith of His followers at once undertook to make His person and His life accord with the prophecies, the existence of which became for them the great proof. Since the incidents of the Master's life quickly faded out, they accomplished their purpose without much trouble." [849]

This so-called rule, which the radical school so insistently maintains, is so audacious that more than one critic belonging to that school has protested against it. As one of them says, "Why may not Jesus, that excellent Israelite, have utilized, under such or such circumstances, the thoughts and prophecies of the Old Testament as guiding stars for His conduct?" [850] This remark is correct enough; but we must needs go much farther. It is certain, as the Jews formerly believed, as we Catholics believe, and as a great number of Protestants also believe, that many facts in the life of the Messias had been predicted long before His time by divinely inspired prophets. It is not, therefore, in a retrospective manner that the oracles we speak of were applied to Him. Neither the Evangelists nor the early Christians invented this proof, which, in its *ensemble* and in most of its details, they had received traditionally from the Jews.[851] We have elsewhere proved the perfect sincerity of the Savior's four biographers, who, especially when addressing themselves to Israel, would surely have been careful not to spoil their case by an argument whose weakness would have been at once obvious to all.

But up to a certain point we comprehend the Rationalist

[849] Guignebert, *Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne du Christianisme: Les Origines*, p. 166. In the opinion of A. Réville (*Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 176) the Messianic prophecies, grouped as we present them above, are only "an artificially built scaffolding," erected according to "an arbitrary method," a structure which "modern criticism has gradually demolished."

[850] Otto Schmiedel, *Die Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 2d ed., 1906, p. 51.

[851] For the application of each of the Messianic prophecies, see the principal commentaries and the works cited above.

error. What we find so striking in these noble prophecies, is for them mere artifice, if not more or less conscious falsehood. Neither side of the wonderful diptych is able to satisfy them. The prophetic side is caused by religious enthusiasm, if not by fanaticism. The side devoted to the fulfilment was invented out of the whole cloth, or at least exaggerated. It has been truly said that "the argument drawn from the prophecies has its full value only for believers . . . Especially in the matter of prophecies is it necessary to be a member of the family in order to understand their language perfectly." [852] Father Lagrange says: [853] "Without a certain religious feeling,—whatever may be the part which grace takes therein,—it is useless to undertake the interpretation of the prophecies; one would find no light there." Nay, we would add, often one would find there only obscurity; of this proposition the Rationalists are a living proof. One of them frankly declares [854] that he and his colleagues "are *a priori* rather ill disposed with regard to this sort of proof."

Hence we will here confine ourselves to setting down a few of the facts which prove that we have a right to believe in the Messianic prophecies and in their fulfilment in Christ.

In the first place we can cite the clear and explicit testimony of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, whose authority is supreme and infallible for us.[855] Several times He most forcefully affirmed that the whole Bible was occupied with Him. To it He refers the hostile and unbelieving Pharisees: "Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of me." [856] To them He refers also His disciples and friends: "Beginning at Moses

[852] Hugueny, *Critique et Catholique,* I, 52 f.

[853] *Revue Biblique,* 1906, p. 309.

[854] Guignebert, *Modernisme et Tradition Catholique,* p. 55.

[855] We here give a summary of a few pages that we called "Jésus-Christ Centre de la Bible," in the first volume of our *Sainte Bible Commentée,* pp. 2–10.

[856] John 5 : 39.

and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him[857] . . . These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me." [858] Note that He applies to Himself not only the Bible as a whole, but a certain number of specific and apparently minute details, such as the symbol of the brazen serpent,[859] the preaching of Isaias regarding the Messias' gentle and merciful conduct,[860] various prophecies relating to His Passion,[861] etc. When on the point of expiring, He uttered that victorious cry: *Consummatum est* (τετέλεσται, It is consummated), to signify that He had completely fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning His life, His mission, and His death.

Like their Master, the Evangelists and Apostles continually appeal to the Bible, drawing copiously from the rich treasury of the Messianic prophecies, extolling the perfect harmony that exists between the life of Christ and the Old Testament. In their eyes there is no shadow of a doubt that Mary's Son is He "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." [862] The four biographies of the Savior on every page emphasize the providential conformity of a large number of His acts with the predictions and figures of the Old Covenant.

Christ fulfilled, trait for trait, the great prophetic ideal,—such is the fundamental thought on which St. Matthew insists with extraordinary force. It is the plan, the design of God Himself that is thus brought into relief. It is not a question of simple adaptation, but of strict accomplishment. Al-

[857] Luke 24:27.

[858] Luke 24:44. Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms here stand for the three great divisions of the Hebrew Bible: the Pentateuch, the prophetical books, and the poetical or sapiential books.

[859] John 3:14.

[860] Matt. 12:16–21.

[861] Matt. 26:54; Luke 22:37.

[862] John 1:45.

though not writing directly for the Jews, as did the First Evangelist, St. Mark and St. Luke follow a procedure similar to his and they, too, prove, by passages taken from different portions of the Old Testament, that Jesus is in very truth the promised Messias. As for St. John, he adopts St. Matthew's phrase, *ut adimpleretur,* and constantly bases his narrative on the prophetic oracles.

The writings of the Old Testament also furnish the Savior's other Apostles and disciples with the substratum of their discourses and letters. St. Peter in the all too rare pages that remain to us from his hand seems to have been especially impressed with the literal and perfect fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies in his Master. Having cited Joel,[863] David,[864] Moses,[865] and Isaias,[866] he sums up his thought in these words: "All the prophets, from Samuel and afterwards, who have spoken, have told of these days [*i. e.,* the Messianic era]." [867] St. Paul, the converted rabbi, who had eagerly studied the Sacred Scriptures and Jewish traditions, makes frequent appeal to the testimony of the Old Testament, to prove to his former coreligionists that Jesus united in His person all the qualities ascribed to the Redeemer-Messias. His preaching might be reduced to these words: "To whom [the Jews] he [Paul] expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, out of the law of Moses and the prophets." [868] His Epistles, so full of the name and love of Jesus Christ, constantly insist on this essential proof. At first blush, his applications sometimes appear surprisingly far-fetched; for instance, in certain passages where the history of the Israelites is correlated with that of Christ

[863] Acts 2:16–21.
[864] Acts 2:25–28.
[865] Acts 3:22 f.
[866] 1 Pet. 2:6.
[867] Acts 3:24 f.
[868] Acts 28:23.

and His Church.[869] But the Apostle is careful to cite this deep principle: "All these things happened to them in figures." [870] The prophecy in this case is, therefore, simply typical and indirect.

We saw above that the authors of the Targums, the Talmud, and the *Midrachim* likewise searched the Bible, but with manifest exaggerations, for anticipatory traces of the Messias. Considered in itself, their zeal was praiseworthy and in accord with the truth. Of course, "One must not want to apply everything directly to the Messias; but the passages which do not immediately refer to Him serve at least as a support to those which proclaim Him. 'In a lyre,' says St. Augustine, 'the strings alone are sonorous by their very nature, and yet the wood on which they are mounted has no other purpose but to contribute to the production of the sounds; so, too, is it with the whole Old Testament, which, like a harmonious lyre, resounds with the name and the reign of Jesus Christ.' " [871]

The Fathers and Christian doctors of the first centuries were fond of regarding all the books of the Old Testament as so many converging rays, with the Lord Jesus as the real center. After the manner of the Evangelists and Apostles, and in keeping with the Savior's urgent counsel, they searched the Scriptures with a view to finding the promised Messias therein. The Christological horizon of the so-called Epistle of Barnabas and of the writings of St. Justin, Tertullian, and St. Irenaeus, is as rich as it is admirable. "The Holy Spirit by the mouth of the prophets foretold everything concerning Jesus Christ," says St. Justin,[872] and if that prediction was not always made in direct and obvious terms, it at least took

[869] Cf. 1 Cor. 10:1–10; Gal. 4:21–31; Heb. 11:3–40, etc.

[870] 1 Cor. 10:11.

[871] Le Hir, *Les Trois Grands Prophètes, Isaie, Jérémie, Ezéchiel: Analyses et Commentaires*, 1877, pp. 14 f.

[872] *Apol.*, I, 6: τὰ κατὰ τον Ἰησοῦν πάντα.

place by means of symbols, parables, and figures.[873] Origen and the other teachers of the learned and illustrious School of Alexandria did not fail to exploit so rich a mine, though they also fall into some exaggerations in matters of detail.[874] After them and with great discretion the other Fathers of the Church, those of the West as well as those of the East,—Ambrose, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine; Ephrem, Basil, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Eusebius of Caesarea,—developed the thesis that a wonderful symphony exists between the Old and the New Testaments, with regard to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

From those remote times down to our own, all Christian interpreters have hailed Jesus, the true Messias, in the Bible of the Jews, which manifests Him in so frequent and real a manner. Our great medieval writers, and after them, at the dawn of modern times, St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, and later on Pascal,[875] the deep thinker of the seventeenth century, and Bossuet, the great orator; lastly, in our own day, orthodox Protestant as well as Catholic interpreters and theologians, have valiantly and intelligently defended the Messianic prophecies. In the face of all this, what becomes of Proudhon's insolent and senseless bravado: "If anyone can show me in the Old Testament a single line relating to the New, I will consider myself beaten"? [876]

And so, as Father Lagrange says, "there were men, in Israel and nowhere else, to announce to their nation a King, consecrated with holy oil, an Anointed One or Messias, whose

[873] *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 114: *συμβολικῶς, ἐν παραβολῇ, ἐν τροπολογία.*

[874] They said, by way of excusing themselves, that it was better to seek Christ ten times where He is not, than once to forget Him where He really is.

[875] See an interesting article by Lagrange, *"Pascal et les Prophètes Messianiques,"* in the *Revue Biblique*, 1906, pp. 334–360.

[876] A saying quoted by Richou, *Le Messie et Jésus-Christ dans les Prophéties de la Bible*, 1881, p. viii.

rôle they describe, and it is especially by Him that was to be effected a great religious renewal which, starting from the Jewish people, would extend to all mankind." [877] This Messias has come and is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

IX. Sources of the Gospel Accounts of the Holy Infancy

1. Two relatively recent writers, L. Conrady and Alfred Resch, deserve separate mention here. In a work entitled, *Die Quelle der kanonischen Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu, ein wissenschaftlicher Versuch* (1900), Conrady, who belonged to the extreme left wing of the contemporary exegetical school, set out to prove that St. Matthew and St. Luke had recourse to one and the same source for their accounts of the Savior's infancy, though each of them utilized it differently. This supposed document, written in Hebrew and translated into Greek, did not differ, he says, from the apocryphal book known by the name of *Protoevangelium Jacobi,* which, according to Conrady, made its appearance about the year 130. We can understand how, to sustain such a thesis, its defender would have to resort to wild conjectures and to false and arbitrary combinations and conclusions. As Conrady was told from all sides, the *Protoevangelium Jacobi,* like the other apocryphal gospels, of which it is one of the strangest, is partly derived from the canonical books and could not therefore serve them as a source.

Resch's work, *Das Kindheitsevangelium nach Lukas und Matthäus . . . quellenkritisch untersucht* (1897), is a more serious essay. This author supposes that the common source of St. Matthew and St. Luke consisted of a small and very early document that treated only of the birth and infancy of Christ and was published first in Hebrew and then in Greek. The dif-

[877] Lagrange, *loc. cit.,* p. 335.

ferences that exist between the accounts of our two Evangelists Resch attributes to the fact that they did not utilize the same parts of this collection. He even claims to have reconstructed this document, which he reproduces in two parallel columns, according to what he considers to be the Hebrew original and the Greek translation. Moreover, he believes in the historical character of most of the facts, whereas Conrady treats them entirely as legends. As might be expected, neither of these systems has found convinced followers, for they are obviously "built on sand." [878]

2. To clear the way for their subversive theories concerning the historic value of these same accounts of the Infancy, the critics affect either to increase the number of documents from which the two Evangelists drew their material, or to ascribe to them an origin which would rob them of all authority. On the one hand they attribute to St. Matthew, and especially to St. Luke, such a large number of pretended sources that the four chapters which these two Evangelists devote to our Lord's infancy become nothing but patchwork, a sort of inlaid mosaic. Some critics, indeed, are so amazingly sharp-sighted that they discover and point out, line by line, what comes from oral or written tradition, what from the chief editor, and what from the final revision. They can distinguish the primitive elements, the slightest retouchings, substitutions, etc., in these pages whose perfect unity are an object of admiration to the most competent judges, not blinded by preconceived notions. On the other hand, the accounts of the Infancy have sometimes been referred to Jewish-Christian documents which, according to our opponents, were deeply imbued with the Ebionite spirit, which was much more Jewish than Christian. For an excellent refutation of this system, see an article by Father Lagrange in the *Revue Biblique,* Vol. IV, pp. 160–185.

[878] See page 19.

X. Attacks of the Critics upon the Accounts of the Holy Infancy

1. The general reasons which prove that the first of our four Gospels was written by St. Matthew and the third by St. Luke, evidently apply to the entire contents of those writings, including the history of the Infancy. However, the authenticity of the four chapters relating that history has been so often assailed that it will not be profitless at this point to examine the special arguments on which such denial is based.[879]

Of the proofs which the Liberal or Rationalist critics advance to justify their denial, some concern the two Evangelists simultaneously, others refer either to St. Matthew or to St. Luke alone. We will take them up one by one. But let us first note that none of them is taken from the weighty category of extrinsic arguments, the arguments from authority; without exception they all belong to that class of demonstration called intrinsic, where dogmatic prejudices can so easily intrude themselves. All the early Greek manuscripts and all the early versions contain the accounts of the Infancy just as we read them to-day. The Fathers and doctors of the second and third centuries quote from them. The pagan writer Celsus shows that he is acquainted with them, for he makes allusions to them.[880]

It is true that the accounts of the Infancy are entirely lacking in the Gospel composed by Marcion (d. *circa* 165),[881] and their absence seems doubly surprising, so far as St. Luke is concerned, because this famous heresiarch expressly proposed

[879] The negation goes back to the close of the eighteenth century, the period when Williams published his *Free Inquiry into the Authenticity of the First and Second Chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel,* 1771; 2d ed., 1790. Since then it has never ceased.

[880] See Origen, *Contra Celsum,* I, 28; II, 32.

[881] It opens at the time of John the Baptist's appearance on the banks of the Jordan.

to publish a new edition of the Third Gospel. But it is all explained when we recall the elements of Marcion's scheme. Deeply immersed as he was in the errors of Docetism, he rejected the human birth of Jesus, whose body, according to him, was only a phantom under which the Christ was hidden. He therefore suppressed the first two chapters of St. Luke, which told directly against his theory, and not only these two chapters, but also various other passages which condemned his theory.[882]

Nor is it on the basis of external criteria, suggested by literary criticism, that modern Rationalists eliminate the accounts of the Infancy, but for purely imaginary reasons. They first of all affirm that the four chapters in question are but loosely attached to the real body of the Gospels, of which they form the preamble, and that they are easily separable from them. Hence they must be later insertions. The episodes which they relate are completely heterogeneous, without any real connection with the public life of Christ, so that between them and the latter there is a veritable hiatus.

These are purely gratuitous assertions, as may be seen from the presence of these accounts in the manuscripts and versions. That the events have a character of their own, is evident. The Savior's infancy could not, indeed, resemble any other part of His human existence. Yet it is the natural preparation and, so to speak, the prophecy of His later life. Without the facts of the Infancy we would have a very imperfect knowledge of

[882] Cfr. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, xxvii, 2; III, xii, 7, etc.; St. Epiphanius, *Haer.* I, xiii, 11; Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion.*, I, 1 and IV, 2. Tatian also, according to Theodoret (*Haeretic. Fab.*, I, 20) for a like reason in his *Diatessaron* suppressed the Savior's genealogy and the accounts of His infancy. Whether the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which at one time held an important place in the Eastern Church and which was very close to St. Matthew's Gospel, contained the first two chapters of the latter, is a much disputed question. Sound reasons, however, enable us to answer the question in the affirmative. See Stanton, *The Gospels as Historic Documents*, I, 257–260.

Our Lord; thanks to them, we are able to contemplate in the Divine Infant, drawing to Himself the love of His Father and the admiration of men, the future Redeemer, the Messias promised to the world. They are therefore a fitting vestibule to the rest of His life, and we cannot say that they could readily be detached and made into a separate book, complete in itself.[883] If any lacuna can be felt between them and the public life of Jesus, this is owing to the fact that it was the design of Providence that the Messias should remain hidden and unknown for many years in His obscure retreat at Nazareth.

But St. Mark is silent on the holy Infancy, and regards the preaching of John the Baptist as "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[884] Furthermore, the Apostles in their preaching, at least in the beginning, took no notice of the preliminary facts of the Savior's life and placed in the first rank those referring to the ministry of the precursor.[885] These two objections, which really amount to only one, prove absolutely nothing. St. Mark carried out his plan, which was to reproduce as closely as possible the preaching of his teacher, St. Peter; the other two Synoptics likewise followed each his own plan. Each of the four biographers of Christ was entirely free in the choice of the events to be narrated. Biblical criticism, therefore, sees nothing in St. Mark's silence. As for the preaching of the Apostles and the first Christian missionaries, if, in a general way, it was especially insistent on the facts of Our Lord's public life, His Passion and Resurrection, this is because these facts were much more characteristic and easier to prove historically. But it does not follow from this that the Apostles in their teaching observed absolute silence on the first years of the Master. The interest which the early

[883] Such is the theory of Dr. A. Resch.

[884] Mark 1:1–4.

[885] Acts 1:21; 10:37; 13:23–25, etc.

Christians took in the Savior's personal history extended to His infancy as well as to the other parts of His life, and certainly satisfaction was not denied that pious and legitimate curiosity.

2. To these general attacks the critics add others, more specific, touching in turn upon the authors of the two narratives of the Infancy. These objections relate either to their general literary character or their fundamental thought. From this double viewpoint, the critics consider the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke as being opposed to the rest of their narratives, claiming to find therein certain grave incompatibilities which would require distinct editors in both cases.

Speaking of the first and second chapters of St. Matthew, an English critic, usually moderate, wrote not long ago: "Considerations of style and general structure favor the probability of their being from another hand than that which furnished the main body of the Gospel." [886] Another English critic, of a somewhat Liberal turn, replies that "the internal literary evidence is extraordinarily strong" [887] in favor of authenticity. Entering on some details, he remarks, after the manner of many other exegetes, that in the forty-eight verses which make up these two chapters,—eliminating the sixteen that contain the genealogy of Christ—are found a great number of expressions that are regarded as characteristic of St. Matthew's vocabulary.[888] And it is not only the diction which is identical with that of chapters III to XXVIII, but also the style, the method, the dominant thought. In his account of the Infancy, as throughout his whole Gospel, St. Matthew, conformable to his apologetic purpose, delights in emphasiz-

[886] J. S. Clemens in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels,* I, 823.

[887] Burkitt, *Evangelion da Mepharesḧe,* 1900, II, 259.

[888] *E. g.,* ἀναχωρεῖν ὄναρ, πληροῦσθαι, ῥηθέν, σφόδρα, τότε, etc. Cfr. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae, Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem,* 1899, pp. 4–7.

ing Christ's fulfilment of the ancient prophecies relating to His office of Messias. He does so five times in that short space,[889] and he likewise introduces the prophetic texts with the formulas, *"ut adimpleretur," "tunc adimpletum est."* But that also is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the First Gospel. There can, therefore, be no doubt, as several critics admit, that chapters I and II form an integral part of the primitive work of St. Matthew. It is without any solid grounds that their authenticity has been questioned.

The corresponding passages of the Third Gospel have been attacked even more violently, undoubtedly because they proclaim with such superior clearness Christ's supernatural birth, His Messianic office, and His divine nature. We will answer only the principal objections.

First of all, it is asserted, whoever is at all familiar with Jewish affairs, upon reading St. Luke's account of the Infancy of Jesus, will be quickly impressed with its thoroughly Israelitic coloring. It opens in the Temple at Jerusalem, in the very midst of a ceremony of public worship.[890] The precursor is of sacerdotal origin; at least three times [891] the sacred writer mentions the "justice," that is, the holiness, of the chief personages from the Old Testament point of view; in the angel Gabriel's salutation, in Zachary's and Mary's canticles, there appear numerous reminiscences of the theocratic history; the rite of circumcision and the redeeming of the Child Jesus, as also His mother's legal purification, are faithfully carried out; the Holy Family every year goes on pilgrimage to Jerusalem: all these details, and many others besides, are thoroughly Jewish. Commentators who are believing Christians, no less than Rationalist critics, are of the opinion that this portion of the

[889] Matt. 1:22 f.; 2:5 f., 15, 17 f., 23.

[890] The Temple and the public worship of Israel have a considerable part in the first and second chapters of St. Luke; cfr. 1:8–22; 2:22–38, 41–50.

[891] Luke 1:6; 2:17, 25.

Third Gospel is extraordinary from this point of view. However, according to the very clear data of tradition, the author was a pagan by birth and received his education far from Palestine, at Antioch in Syria, where he was born. How then, could he be so familiar with specifically Jewish details?

We in turn ask why the opponents of the authenticity do not remark that the Jewish coloring of the thoughts and facts is self-explanatory and shows that, here as everywhere else, St. Luke is a loyal and conscientious historian, who faithfully repeats what his sources told him? The facts and the ideas necessarily had to be Jewish, since they treat of the Messias, given first of all to the Jews and belonging to their race. The perfect acquaintance with the religious practices of the Jews, already made sufficiently intelligible by the documents that St. Luke had at hand, become still more natural if we suppose, according to an opinion that was current in St. Jerome's time,[892] that he had become a Jewish proselyte before adopting the Christian faith. As has been loyally acknowledged by one of the principal adepts of modern Rationalism, on any hypothesis "the dominant thoughts [in the accounts of the Infancy according to St. Luke] do not differ from those of the Third Gospel considered as a whole." [893]

Another objection is based on the style in which these same accounts are written. It differs so greatly from that which connoisseurs so justly admire in the Third Gospel as a whole and in the Acts of the Apostles,[894] especially in the Prologue (*Luke* 1: 1–4), that it could not, as they repeatedly assure us, have come from the pen of St. Luke. It is a fact that Aramaicisms abound therein. We note in particular: clauses simply juxtaposed and joined by the conjunction *and* (καί) instead of being elegantly constructed and balanced in the Greek fash-

[892] *Quaest. in Gen.*, XLVI.
[893] Paul Wernle, *Quellen des Lebens Jesu*, p. 76.
[894] Written also by St. Luke, as our readers know.

ion;[895] the repeated use of the thoroughly Hebrew and Aramaic formula, "It came to pass";[896] the equally Semitic practice of employing the substantive ῥῆμα (word) in the sense of "thing";[897] numerous other expressions and formulas, such as "in the days of" for "at the time of," "advanced in their days," for "advanced in years," etc.

Does it follow from this that the first and second chapters of the Third Gospel do not in any way belong to St. Luke? Most of the critics are too hasty in so concluding. The phenomenon may be explained by the Evangelist's use of early documents in this passage. These documents were, as we saw, written in Aramaic, or perhaps, following another hypothesis, St. Luke had a very close Greek translation of them before him. While incorporating these documents into his narrative, he thought it well to preserve their original flavor and consequently modified their style but little. Yet he managed to introduce the most characteristic peculiarities of his own style, for we find them there repeatedly.[898] Hence we may not affirm that the accounts of the Infancy in the Third Gospel form "a piece entirely independent" with respect to style. St. Luke lays claim to their authorship in the little prologue with which they are closely connected. If that authorship is somewhat less solely his own, in the sense just indicated, it is nevertheless a real authorship, and we should be glad that the author of the Third Gospel left in his narrative the primitive coloring of the early documents which he used with such remarkable skill.

We conclude then, in the words of a contemporary whose tendencies are rather Liberal: "Literary criticism has adduced

[895] Cfr. 1:12–17, 21–23, 30–33, etc.

[896] Ἐγένετο; cfr. 1:8, 23, 41; 2:1, 6, 15, 46.

[897] Vulg., *verbum*. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew *dabar*. Cfr. 1:37, 65; 2:15, 19, 51.

[898] "The style and vocabulary of these chapters are distinctly those of Luke," says Harnack, *Lukas der Arzt*, p. 69; and he sets forth the proof on pages 69–73. 138–152.

nothing striking against these accounts" [899] of Christ's Infancy, and nothing whatever against their authenticity. We are now going to see that their historicity has withstood even more violent attacks equally well.

3. What a curious chrestomathy might be composed by quoting the views of Rationalist critics on the credibility of the accounts of the Infancy for the last century and a half! [900] But they are so much alike that the reader would soon feel wearied and disgusted. However, we must mention a few.

More than a century ago Herder (✝ 1803) regarded these accounts as late additions, corresponding to new needs of the early Christians,—additions that have nothing historical about them, but supply the beginnings of the "holy epopee," expressly created to prove that Jesus was the promised Messias.[901] Much closer to our time is Dr. Karl Hase, who completely abandoned the task of extracting from the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke "any historical reality whatsoever." [902] Auguste Sabatier asserts that "only the public life of Jesus belongs to history," [903] whereas His hidden life is either unknown or legendary. Such is the sentence unanimously pronounced by a school of criticism which takes pains to inform us that it is "irrevocable." [904] Thus several critics, while claiming to relate the life of Christ, observe a complete silence on the facts of the holy Infancy. This is what has been well named "the conspiracy of silence."

Do these accounts contain at least some real elements, running through the legends that form their substance? Yes,

[899] F. Barth, *Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 270.

[900] Our collection includes more than fifty of them.

[901] Cfr. A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung,* p. 36.

[902] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 238.

[903] See Lichtenberger's *Encyclopĕdie des Sciences Religieuses,* VII, 362 f.; cfr. E. Reuss, *Histoire Évangélique,* p. 105; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 262; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 139 f., 169.

[904] A. Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war,* p. 62; cfr. Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 6, etc.

probably; our opponents are willing to admit that much. "Half-lost echoes of Christ's Infancy may have here or there acted as directing motives of the fiction; but nowhere is it possible to put one's finger on them." [905] Some authors, however, take the trouble to count them and to point them out. Among others is Dr. Keim, who says: "Out of the whole legend of the Infancy there remains but very little as a historically certain residue; but what remains is enough: the birth in a pious Jewish family, the circumcision on the eighth day, . . . and lastly the name of Jesus." [906] Some consent to add the names of Mary and Joseph.

If we are to take their word, it is with keen regret and constrained by undeniable evidence that these critics lay destructive hands on a story whose poetic beauty and moral symbolism they pretend to appreciate as highly as anyone. Thus we find, in the case of most of them, what we might call a chorus of banal regrets. Even the grave Dr. Keim has recourse to this palliative, and grandiloquently says: "We do not attack the eternal right of these beautiful legends, in the midst of which we happily grew up. They are the prophetic dawn of a great day of divine splendor, of a might that stirs the world . . . But ideal history does not stubbornly ask to be taken as real history." [907] After all, if the "anecdotes" recounted by SS. Matthew and Luke are like "scented flowers" which have been woven into a garland for the Child Jesus, these flowers are purely "artificial," which makes their loss less keenly felt.[908] Christmas will always keep its charm for us, because it will be agreeable for us to think of the immense number of generations that have been edified by these stories, and "we shall rejoice over the fact that Jesus produced such

[905] Holtzmann, *Hand-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 3d ed., I, 41.

[906] *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, I, 384; cfr. Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., I, 159 f.

[907] *Geschichte Jesu*, I, 373.

[908] Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

a powerful impression on His contemporaries." [909] And so forth, on all the notes of the scale. Let us pass on, while we pity those who so readily share in such a negation.

With what reasons do they undertake to justify this negation? [910] It cannot be too much insisted upon that Rationalism rejects these accounts only because they run counter to the preconceived idea that certain things *cannot take place* and that, by that very fact, the testimony of those who relate them *must be rejected.* With all the energy possible we protest against this theory. "To decide *a priori* that Deity cannot become incarnate, or that incarnate Deity must exhibit such and such characteristics, is neither true philosophy nor scientific criticism." [911] We cannot repeat often enough that, by themselves, the historians and their accounts offer every possible guaranty of historical value. Honest and loyal, St. Matthew and St. Luke patently are. "It is certain," writes Karl Hase, an advanced Rationalist, "that they did not intend to recount legends, but history." [912] And besides, they are here as everywhere else serious and well informed writers.[913] Their admirable knowledge of the social, political, and religious environment in which the Child Jesus lived shows how exact and minute their information was. Profoundly respecting, as they did, the Gospel tradition,[914] which they regarded as a sacred de-

[909] H. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des N. T.,* p. 70; cfr. E. Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* pp. 50 f.

[910] No one has presented them better than Strauss, in his two Lives of Jesus (*Vie de Jésus,* 3d ed., I, 121–237; *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus,* I, 251–254; II, 3–95; cfr. Weinel, *Jesus im XIX. Jahrhundert.* 2d ed., pp. 43–51); it is from this same arsenal that arms continue to be taken for the purpose of making a breach in the truthfulness of the accounts of the Infancy. Hardly any of these weapons have been left unappropriated except his myth theory, which has long since gone out of style.

[911] Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew,* 1909, p. xxxiii.

[912] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 233.

[913] We demonstrated this above, when speaking of their sources and of the ease with which they were able to obtain reliable information.

[914] Luke 1 : 1–4.

posit entrusted to their care, how could they have dared sacrilegiously to falsify their narrative at the beginning by introducing into it legendary fictions?

The accounts themselves are no less marked with the seal of truth than are the historians. Their sobriety, their lacunae, their simplicity of language, their charming frankness are excellent criteria to begin with. Would one say, at first sight, that they are expounding the most stupendous miracle of history? Throughout their accounts are of such a nature that they could not arouse the slightest suspicion against the reliability of their authors or of the documents from which they drew. As has been said many a time, it is not thus that legend finds expression. Better still, on close examination they are found to be, as one English commentator puts it, "true to life" [915] in all their details, that is, in perfect agreement with what we know from other sources,[916] of the Jewish life of that time. Not only are the details they give of Jewish worship remarkably exact, not only is the general status of the theocratic nation in our Lord's time portrayed in true colors, but the acts and words which the authors assign to the various characters are irreproachable from the viewpoint of historic truth. What pictures they give us of Zachary, Elizabeth, the aged Simeon, the prophetess Anna, Joseph, and Mary, especially Mary! Yet these portraits are but rapid sketches. Who would be able to invent such things?

No, indeed. There is nothing that leads us to suppose that the imagination of the narrators or of the nascent Church was given free rein in these pages. Not a few of the facts related are confirmed by profane history. Thus, the slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehem is in perfect accord with King Herod's cruelty, and St. Joseph's fears with regard to Ar-

[915] Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, p. 6.
[916] Particularly Josephus and the Talmud.

chelaus [917] were justified by the character of that ruler. From Bethlehem it was natural that, to escape danger, the Holy Family should flee into Egypt, the nearest independent country. How many other precise and concrete details imprint on the two narratives a strictly historical character! Suffice it to mention in passing the priestly class of Abia,[918] "a city of Galilee, called Nazareth," the mountains of Juda, the census of Qurinius, the eighty-four years of the prophetess Anna,[919] the growth of the Boy Jesus. "To an unbiased reader the history of the Infancy according to St. Luke, and also according to St. Matthew, with its sincere accent, produces the impression of an early tradition, which does not forestall later times, but describes men as they really existed in Herod's last years, looking for the salvation of God." [920] This concession has special worth, coming as it does from an author who is at least half a Rationalist.

Having made these general remarks, let us pass on to the detailed objections which the critics raise against the accounts of the Infancy. They are reducible to six heads: the poetic beauty and literary art that prevail in these pages, especially in those of St. Luke; the element of the marvelous "that flows so copiously through them"; the silence of all the other New Testament writers; the differences, nay, irreconcilable contradictions that are said to exist between the two narratives; the historical errors which are supposed to be found in them; the foreign and pagan influences which, it is claimed, have penetrated them in large numbers and are clearly visible. Let us try to reply as briefly as possible to these various objections and to demonstrate that, if difficulties are found here and there, none of them is important and they are grossly magnified by our opponents.

[917] Matt. 2:22.
[918] Luke 1:5.
[919] Luke 2:37.
[920] F. Barth, *Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu*, 2d ed., p. 271.

a) Is it not strange for anyone seriously to think of regarding these accounts as "belonging to the domain of pure legend," on the pretext that they set forth facts which are admirable in themselves, and that they present these facts with "a divine art"? [921] That a series of events may be regarded as historical, is it necessary that they be stripped of all intrinsic beauty and that they be clumsily narrated? Yet it is to this absurd conclusion that the objection leads, if we press it, though never so little. Let us gladly recognize that, in sketching the fulfilment of the divine ideal which is called the Incarnation of the Word, the two Evangelists measure up to their task. Whatever Rationalist criticism may assert, we do no violence to these pictures of "marvelous poetic beauty" by interpreting them literally; on the contrary, we would be offering them violence were we to treat them, as we are asked to do, as "simple prose," meaning, as the conscious expression of a legend.[922]

b) A second objection is derived from the multiplicity of marvelous and miraculous facts with which, so the Rationalist critics say, the accounts of the Infancy are encumbered. Strauss claims that "the supernatural is here pushed to extravagance, and the improbable to the impossible." [923] He adds, in his usual flippant style: "When we see the marvelous so lavishly wasted, without any regard for the *lex parcimoniae,* we are tempted to attribute this profusion rather to human opin-

[921] The expression is Renan's, as is the term "pretty accounts." All the neocritics, both great and small, from Keim to Mehlhorn and Saltau, speak in the same strain.

[922] It has justly been noted that in the first two chapters of St. Luke there is a striking parallelism between the episodes of the childhood of John the Baptist and those of Christ's childhood. But it is wrong to affirm that it is established by the Evangelist on his own authority. Cfr. L. Conrady, *Die Quelle der Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu,* pp. 34 f.; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 383, etc. This arrangement is not the simple "product of literary art"; it is the product of the facts themselves, a providential arrangement.

[923] *Vie de Jésus* (Littré's translation), I, 264.

ions than to Divine Providence."[924] Here as elsewhere, the Rationalists,[925] and even some exegetes or theologians ordinarily regarded as conservative,[926] while fundamentally accepting the historical character of the principal facts, maintain that there has intruded into these accounts a more or less considerable number of literary embellishments, and that we have only to strip the accounts of these additions, by means of intelligent interpretations, in order to obtain the full truth.

We will first answer this latter objection in a few words. Do the critics not see that the undertaking or operation which they propose would be wholly subjective and hence arbitrary? Sane criticism requires that we accept historical narratives as they are, without modifying them in any way. By what right does anyone take the liberty of eliminating such or such a detail? Where would this spoliation cease, which would, moreover, be utterly futile, since after it had been performed, the supernatural element would still hold a preponderant place in the two narratives?

As a matter of fact, this element abounds, under most varied forms, in the First Gospel as in the Third, and it is produced in a relatively limited space of time. But what is there surprising in that? Is not the Incarnation of the Word, the chief fact around which all the others are grouped, an incomparable miracle, and was it not fitting that a whole series of other miracles should follow in its train? It was highly

[924] *Ibid.*, p. 239. Besides the *critici minores,* who are satisfied with reproducing, in still bolder language, the arguments coming from men of greater note, there are the *critici maiores,* notably Th. Keim, J. Weiss, and Bousset, who in eager rivalry repeat the *"Tolle"* of Strauss. With reference to the first two chapters of St. Luke, Dr. J. Weiss writes: "In a narrative where angels come and go, where an aged woman rejoices at the birth of a son, where persons who have the power of speech are stricken dumb, and where the dumb begin to talk, where prophets recognize the Messias in His infancy, history has more profitable occupations than to investigate the historical character of such marvelous events." (*Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments,* I, 383).

[925] B. Weiss and Beyschlag among others.

[926] For example, Th. Zahn.

proper that the Son of God, when He deigned to appear on earth in human form, should be surrounded with honors and that, from the first moments of His new life, His Father should reveal Him to the world by supernatural manifestations that would form a brilliant crown about His crib.

Moreover, what reader in good faith has not been struck by the absence of exaggeration in the Gospel accounts? Nearly everything related therein is a prodigy, and yet, in one sense, if we except the august and superb mystery of the Incarnation, everything takes place so simply and soberly that one would find it hard to conceive any other course of events. The supernatural makes its appearance only in as far as it is legitimately called for. Jesus Himself does not yet perform any miracle. In appearance, save for His wonderful advance in wisdom and grace—which forms the subject of a special inquiry in this volume—He is like all the children of His race and country. Nowhere in St. Matthew and St. Luke do we discover the least trace of those theatrical descriptions which, in the apocryphal gospels, betray the hand of a manufacturer of legends. The advantage which our canonical Gospels possess from this point of view is immense and has often been pointed out with just praise.[927] It must be acknowledged that this contrast furnishes us with an argument of undeniable force in favor of the historical character of the Gospel accounts. On one side there is the bombast and puerility of legend; on the other, the conscientious reserve of genuine history, and we should count ourselves happy that our Bible has remained protected from such imaginings.[928]

To give some semblance of likelihood to their negations, the critics leave no stone unturned. Thus, as it is usually in the nature of a legend to keep growing, they pretend to have

[927] Even by out-and-out Rationalist critics, such as Th. Keim and J. Weiss. See Fillion, *Les Miracles de N.-S. Jésus-Christ*, I, 158–163.

[928] J. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

discovered in the history of the Infancy "a gradual development" of the miraculous element and of "Christology." This growth is easy to observe, they declare, when we pass from St. Matthew's narrative to that of St. Luke. In the latter, "not only is Christ conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, but the history of His nativity is more developed," [929] and there is question of miracles which the First Evangelist has not related.—Yes, indeed; St. Luke does associate a larger number of prodigies with the Savior's Infancy, but for the soundest of reasons: his sketch of this part of Christ's hidden life being much more complete than that of St. Matthew, it was necessary for him to enter into more details. Keeping this circumstance in mind, we can easily see that the two writers have an almost equal portion of the supernatural.[930]

In their efforts to convince us, our opponents remind us that the origin of "great kings and great generals, of great sages and of founders of religions" is usually surrounded by an exuberant halo of legends, made up of appearances of gods on earth, of glowing signs in the sky, of miraculous escapes, etc. And "the sublime truth of Christianity did not long remain free from these appendages." [931]—This conclusion is false, for there is no parity between the obviously legendary and often ridiculous character of the "appendages" in question, where these "heroes" of paganism are concerned, and

[929] H. J. Holtzmann, *Neutestamentliche Theologie,* 1897, I, 447. Cfr. Otto, *Das Leben und Wirken Jesu,* pp. 22 f.; Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war,* pp. 61 f.

[930] Moreover, the critics are far from agreeing on this point. According to Heitmüller (*Jesus,* 1913, p. 51), St. Matthew's narrative bears the stamp of legend more clearly than that of St. Luke. See also Bousset, *Jesus,* p. 2. But the contrary opinion is the prevalent one.

[931] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 336 f.; Neumann, *op. cit.,* pp. 61 f., furnishes us with some names: "No hero of the world's history has been without this embellishment, whether he be Buddha or Plato or Pythagoras." Other writers add the names of the Assyrian King Sargo, Cyrus, Caesar, etc. Cfr. Pfleiderer, *Urchristentum,* I, 555.

the noble and lofty nature of the miracles that served to adorn the Savior's human birth.

The miraculous dreams, apparitions of angels, and the prophetic element which makes its appearance in the narrative,[932] arouse the Liberal critics' antipathy more than do many of the other details. And yet, "unless in a party spirit we discard the possibility of miracles, we cannot deny God's power to make use of any intermediary He pleases in order to enter into relation with man." [933] Moreover, even looking at the question from a purely literary point of view, what is left of the two narratives if we eliminate the angelic apparitions, the intimations given in dreams, the prophecies, and the various facts connected therewith? Resch was right in saying that there would remain only "an unusable text." [934] Except by angels or supernatural dreams, how could Mary and Joseph have known the august office which God deigned to entrust to them? Furthermore, on the basis of the "Biblical premises," "the possibility of the facts related is undeniable," [935] inasmuch as these same means had frequently been employed by the God of Israel during the whole period of the Old Testament to manifest His will. Had not the angel Gabriel, several centuries before, announced to Daniel the date of the Messias' coming? [936] And were not the angels generally deeply interested in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption? [937] It was, therefore, perfectly fitting that they should, by their presence and song, inaugurate the new era that was opening for them and for mankind. Lastly, in what concerns the ancient prophecies, we have already noted that it is a characteristic practice of St. Matthew to connect them with the life

[932] Elizabeth, Mary, and Simeon prophesy one after the other. St. Matthew five times mentions the fulfilment of the ancient oracles.

[933] J. Bovon, *Théologie du Nouveau Testament,* 2d ed., I, 224 f.

[934] *Kindheitsgeschichte,* p. 325.

[935] F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., I, 188.

[936] Daniel, 9: 20–27.

[937] 1 Pet. 1: 12.

of Christ to show that they were especially directed to and fully realized in Him.[938] This whole series of objections, therefore, fails to impress anyone who is unwilling to close his eyes to the light.

But did not primitive Christianity retrospectively idealize the figure of the Infant Jesus under the very lofty impression it had of Him, while He was alive, and still more after His death? This affirmation, already formulated by Strauss, Renan, and their immediate successors, is repeated by the more recent members of the Liberal school. The "pious legends" of the Savior's Infancy are "products of the devotion of the early Church." They deserve our admiration for their poetic beauty; but it would be a misunderstanding of their spirit "to transform them into a story which will always appear improbable," that is, if they were to be interpreted literally.[939] They are a "sentimental idealization."[940] As soon as Jesus was regarded as the promised Savior, the prophecy of Micheas was applied to Him[941] and it was made out that He was born in the city of David and of the race of David. Then He was deified and was given a virgin birth. Lastly, His entry into the world was surrounded by all sorts of brilliant prodigies. In short, it was "the credulity of the first Christians"[942] that little by little created all that ideal fiction, of which scarcely anything is left when it is passed through the crucible of criticism.[943]

No, the primitive Church did not invent the holy and charm-

[938] It is not true that the prophecies "reacted on the facts," as some have asserted, and led the Evangelist or the early Christians "to legendary modifications." On the contrary, it was their fulfilment by our Lord which moved St. Matthew to mention them.

[939] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 2d ed., p. 53.

[940] Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war,* pp. 61 f.

[941] Mich. 5:2; cfr. Matt. 2:5 f.

[942] Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 37.

[943] Cfr. A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 403; A. Bruce, article "Jesus" in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica,* II, 1436; Crooker, *Supremacy of Christ,* pp. 69 f.; Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels,* pp. 115–117, etc.

ing mysteries of Christ's Infancy. If it recognized Him as the Messias, even in His infancy, if it venerated and loved Him as the Redeemer of the world, if it adored Him as its God, it did so because it had incontestable proofs of His Messianic character and divine nature. The critics, by affirming the contrary, reverse history. Their repeated assertions on the subject of the idealization of the Infancy,—and also of the public life and the glorified life—of Our Lord, are as false as they are gratuitous. Once again we repeat that, to defeat them, it suffices to refer to the honesty and genuine documentation of the two Evangelists, who recount only what they derived from the most trustworthy sources. St. Matthew wrote his Gospel between the years 42 and 50; St. Luke, who composed his before the year 70, depends on the testimony of ocular or auricular witnesses; there could not, therefore, be any question of inventions due to the second Christian generation.

But let us go to the very bottom of the facts. In reality, "the primitive Church placed Christ at the highest point of humanity and of universal creation; she considered Him as having come forth from the bosom of God and descended here below to redeem men, as having again ascended to Heaven and there sitting at the right hand of His Father, whose power and divinity He shares, and that He will one day return in His glory to judge the living and the dead. Now, if our Gospel of the Infancy were the product of Christian imagination or of theological speculation, would it have dreamed of showing us Christ Jesus lying in a manger, compelled to flee to Egypt so as to escape the fury of King Herod, passing His childhood in humble subjection to His parents in a workshop at Nazareth?" [944]

To supplement this excellent argument, let us add that certain other incidents, such as St. Joseph's suspicions, the sorrowful prophecy of Simeon, the imperfect understanding of

[944] Lepin, *Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu*, p. 53.

one of Christ's sayings by Mary and Joseph, scarcely harmonize with an idealization.

c) From St. Mark's silence the critics draw an argument against the authenticity of the Savior's preliminary history. This argument we have already pointed out. They repeat it here and, to further strengthen it, join to the silence of the Second Gospel, that of St. John, St. Paul, and the other New Testament writers. They even go so far as to adduce, in favor of their cases, the silence of Jesus and Mary. Karl Hase writes: [945] "This much is certain: Matthew and Luke stand alone here, each with his narrative. Nowhere in the whole Apostolic Church is there any evidence coming to the aid of either of them; nowhere in the course of their own history [*i. e.,* of Christ's public life, Passion and His life after the Resurrection], and nowhere in the Apostolic preaching, is there to be heard any echo of it." [946]

Not long ago we were much gratified to read the vigorous protest of a Liberal Anglican theologian against the *argumentum e silentio,* which, he says, has so often been sadly abused. It is too easily forgotten that for this argument to have any value, it is necessary that those against whom it is invoked should have been strictly bound to break silence. Now, this indispensable condition is wanting in a multitude of cases, and especially so with regard to the accounts of the Infancy. We had no difficulty in justifying St. Mark's silence in the matter of these accounts. That of St. John, St. Paul, and the other New Testament writers may be explained in the same

[945] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 223.

[946] The Rationalist critics try to outdo one another in repeating this objection. Says Albert Réville (*Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 389): "We must draw attention to the fact that, throughout the rest of the Gospel history, there is not a single trace of this birth at Bethlehem (and, in general, of the other details of the Infancy). Neither Mary nor John nor Paul make the least allusion to it." Réville is frank enough to add that "this is not a formal proof against the tradition recorded by the two Synoptics." See also A. Sabatier, article "Jésus" in Lichtenberger's *Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses,* VII, 362 f., etc.

way. None of them set out to write, from the viewpoint either of history or of dogma, all he knew of the Savior's life. Why, then, should they be obliged to speak of His Infancy? The Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, and St. Jude are occasional writings, treating exclusively of what concerned the actual circumstances of those to whom they were addressed. Consequently they are fragmentary writings; and it is not for us retrospectively to decide their theme according to our own requirements. From this we see how false is the conclusion of those critics who baldly say: Neither Mark nor John nor Paul mentions the episodes of the Infancy; therefore they were not acquainted with them, and it follows that these episodes have not the guaranty of Apostolic testimony or even of ecclesiastical tradition.[947] Anyone can see what the consequences of such reasoning, in the matter of historical criticism, would be if pushed to excess. St. John, for example, gives no account of the temptation of Christ or of the institution of the Holy Eucharist: should we conclude from this that he was unacquainted with those events or that they are legendary?

But we will go farther than this and venture to say that St. John and St. Paul, while not directly mentioning the accounts of the Infancy, do, to a certain extent, presuppose them. Does not the former, in his prologue, go far beyond St. Matthew and St. Luke in so forcefully and beautifully proclaiming the pre-existence of Jesus Christ? In thus declaring the Savior's divinity, does he not implicitly recognize that His birth could not have been like that of other men? [948] The

[947] "Because of the silence of Paul and that of the other Evangelists . . . we may be sure that the earliest tradition was unacquainted with the accounts of the birth." Harnack, *Wesen des Christentums,* p. 20. Cf. Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 5. etc.

[948] It should be noted that, in the Fourth Gospel, Our Lord on various occasions acknowledges Mary as His mother and she calls Him her Son and obtains His first miracle from Him. Cfr. John 2:1–11; 19:26 f. These details indirectly confirm the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

sublime place which St. Paul constantly assigns to Christ in the hierarchy of the supersensible world, surpasses that which St. Matthew and St. Luke attribute to the little Child of Bethlehem and Nazareth. Assuredly, the silence which is advanced against us "is not a formal proof against the tradition recorded by the two Synoptics."

The critics assert that Mary remained silent on the miraculous events related by the two biographers of the holy Infancy. In fact, it is very likely that she maintained a complete silence until the death and Resurrection of her Divine Son; not, however, after His Ascension, since, as we saw, it is chiefly through her, and even through her alone on certain points, that the glorious episodes of Christ's birth and infancy were disclosed. Did Jesus Himself reveal them to His most intimate Apostles? We do not know; it is quite possible that He did not. But what difference does that make? The primitive Church quickly and surely acquired a knowledge of that heavenly history, and that through channels entirely excluding doubt.

There is another and equally vain objection based on a different sort of silence: that which suddenly surrounds the Infant Christ, notwithstanding the prodigies that encompassed His crib with such brilliance. "Was it possible that one whose early days had been marked by so many marvelous signs, could have been allowed to reach manhood in obscurity? Would He not have been pointed out during all the days of His boyhood and youth as the wonder-child over whose birthplace a star had rested?" [949] By reasoning thus, the Liberal theologians of Germany, England, France, and elsewhere attribute to the marvels that accompanied Christ's birth an echo which they certainly did not have and which the Gospel narratives nowhere suppose. These miracles, as we should

[949] Warschauer, *Jesus, Seven Questions,* p. 78; cfr. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 361 f. Most of the critics express themselves in like manner.

bear in mind, took place only during the first days, and the immediate witnesses of them were few in number. The pious hopes aroused by the glad tidings which the shepherds announced to their humble circle, and the mild sensation which the words of Simeon and Anna created in Jerusalem, reached only limited groups. The arrival of the Magi at the Jewish capital did, no doubt, at first stir up keen excitement; but the slaughter of the little children of Bethlehem soon created a sorrowful distraction. The Magi's disappearance, the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt and their sojourn there, also helped to make those passing glories forgotten and to efface the first impressions. And so, when Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus to Nazareth, no one had any suspicion of His heavenly nature and of the great rôle He was destined to play. The divine "bud,"—a beautiful title that several prophets give the Messias,[950]—could, therefore, develop without hindrance during the long period of the hidden life, which was part of the plan of Divine Providence.[951]

d) But do not St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts of the Infancy of Christ prove, by their differences and still more by the real contradictions which they contain, that they deserve little credence? The critics are unanimous in declaring this to be the case. Strauss points to the "reciprocal incompatibility" [952] of the two narratives and concludes that they contain simply "fictions composed or accumulated by the first Christians." The Rationalist exegetes who came after him took up the refrain in chorus,[953] and some more moderate

[950] Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zach. 3:8; 6:12.

[951] See Lepin, *Jésus Messie et Fils de Dieu,* pp. 56 f.

[952] *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus,* I, 86.

[953] Sabatier, article "Jésus" in Lichtenberger's *Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses,* VII, 383, says the two accounts are "absolutely irreconcilable." Loisy, *Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 170: "These contradictory data are products of legendary activity, which had a freer scope, inasmuch as at first it was not under the control of any authentic tradition." Cf. Bousset, *Jesus,* p. 1; Lobstein, *Études Christologiques,* p. 14, etc.

theologians have sung to the same tune.[954] According to them the two accounts are in perpetual conflict and their authors pursue directly opposite paths. So these inexorable judges tell us in advance that any attempts we might make at reconciling the accounts will be unacceptable.[955]

Are these assertions well founded? Instead of attempting to minimize the differences presented by these narratives, we have conscientiously accentuated them. We have emphasized the difference in tone and general orientation of the two accounts and indicated the causes thereof, thus to a certain extent anticipating the objection. Divergences, dissimilarity: these qualifying terms are quite correct; but we emphatically deny that the differences ever amount to contradiction.

This is proven firstly by the concatenation of events. The reader has seen how it is possible, in a way, to find in St. Luke's narrative openings into which that of St. Matthew may be inserted, and it will appear still more clearly when we have occasion to develop those wonderful episodes. The intercalation takes place simply, without any forcing, as the events dovetail into each other with their various details in such wise as to constitute a single narrative. We do not say that the solution we have adopted in accordance with most commentators is absolute and decisive from the chronological point of view. But it seems to us to be the most satisfactory of those which have been proposed.

The assertions of the critics are equally inexact in the matter of the so-called contradiction between certain particular events. Can it be said that St. Luke is in patent opposition to St. Matthew because he connects the principal events with the Blessed Virgin and not with St. Joseph, and because he recounts new details? Certainly not. And so it is for the rest.

[954] Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu,* 4th ed., I, 151; Spitta, *Die synoptische Grundschrift,* p. 1.

[955] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 354; E. Reuss, *Histoire Évangélique,* p. 47.

Since the two Evangelists were free to choose such episodes as they wished to incorporate in their accounts of the Infancy, it would be unjust to accuse them of contradicting each other because they do not relate the same facts. Their narratives, therefore, are independent of each other; but instead of being mutually exclusive, they rather reciprocally confirm each other by their fairly numerous points of contact.[956] It is indeed the same story they tell, while utilizing distinct documents and each retaining his personal physiognomy. Their independence guarantees their truthfulness. In both cases the principal idea stands out with the greatest clearness: Jesus is a miracle Child; the bond that unites Him to humanity was formed outside the ordinary laws of nature. The details that serve as a frame for this idea are accessory and of lesser importance and can, therefore, vary from one Gospel to the other.

Only one point, and that merely in appearance, raises any difficulty. St. Luke [957] seems to say that the Holy Family returned directly from Jerusalem to Nazareth, immediately after Christ's Presentation and Mary's Purification in the Temple, whereas, according to St. Matthew,[958] we must insert before that return the visit of the Magi as well as the flight to Egypt and the sojourn there.[959] But that is simply, on St. Luke's part, a literary procedure frequently employed by the weightiest historians, when it suits them, conformably to their plan, to pass over such or such facts without mention. It is by an artifice of this sort that the same St. Luke seems to fix on the day of the Savior's Resurrection the mystery of the Ascension, which, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, he quite well knew took place forty days later.[960] This sort of omis-

[956] Orr, in his excellent work, *The Virgin Birth of Christ,* points out twenty-two such contacts between St. Matthew's account and that of St. Luke.

[957] Luke 2:39.

[958] Matt. 2:1–23.

[959] Celsus and Porphyrius drew attention to this difficulty. Cfr. St. Epiphanius, *Haer.,* LI, 8.

[960] Cfr. Luke 24:44–53; Acts 1:3.

sion does not justify any inferences; and it does not occur to anyone to attack writers of profane history when they exercise the same liberty.[961] Moreover, from the Evangelist's very words, "After they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth," it clearly follows that the essential thing in his mind was not to fix the exact date of their return to Nazareth, but the faithful performance by Mary and Joseph of all the legal prescriptions that concern the Divine Child and His mother.

e) The critics are not yet at the end of their arguments. "Not only," they say, "do the two traditions [*i. e.,* the accounts by St. Matthew and St. Luke] exclude each other; but each one of them, taken by itself, offers numerous difficulties." [962] These difficulties consist in supposedly grave errors which "the traditional theology,"—meaning the conservative theology of believing Catholics,—can only explain, we are assured, by means of "subterfuges" that "bear witness to its embarrassment." Our opponents especially insist on three such "errors," [963] which belong, the first to the domain of dogma, the second to that of geography, the third to that of chronology. In fact the two Evangelists affirm that Jesus was born of a virgin mother, in the town of Bethlehem, in the reign of Herod the Great, on the occasion of a general census of the Roman Empire, the operations of which were carried out in Palestine by Quirinius. Here, we are told, are three flagrant illusions. We will subject these three facts to a strict inquiry further down and see on which side lies the error.

[961] On the point in question, see St. Augustine, *De Consensu Evangel.,* II, 6; Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse der vier Evangelien,* pp. 152–155; Maldonatus, *Comment. in Matth.,* 2: 13, 22 f.; Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas,* I, 171–173, etc.

[962] Lobstein, *Études Christologiques,* p. 10.

[963] The others consist of unimportant details. It would be useless for us to enter upon a discussion of them here.

f) Not satisfied with asserting that the accounts of the Infancy were subjected in notable proportions to the dogmatic influence of the Christian faith, modern Rationalists have also discovered in them, as elsewhere in the *ensemble* of Christ's life, numerous foreign influences, which they reduce to two principal ones: that of the Old Testament and that of the pagan religions. We will follow them also onto this ground. But what persistent efforts, worthy of a better cause, they make to invent improbable hypotheses, much harder to admit than the supernatural element which they are intended to suppress!

We recognize and acknowledge the Jewish influence which made itself felt on this blessed history. Was not the Messias' childhood Jewish in its smallest details and did it not have to be? Does it not spring from the Old Testament as the flower from the root of the plant? But it is not this natural and legitimate dependence which gives rise to the suspicions of Liberal theologians against the preliminary pages of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Their charge is much graver. They claim that the Old Testament prophecies gave birth to numerous Gospel episodes. The same is true, according to them, with various facts of Jewish history,—facts upon which the two Evangelists have partly traced certain details of the Savior's infancy. The critics entertain not the slightest doubts in the matter. "Little by little all sorts of fantastic stories developed, based on the Old Testament, which was interpreted from the Christian viewpoint, and was even forced so as to draw false explanations from it." [964]

A few specimens of these supposed adaptations will better enable us to enter into our opponents' thought. John the Baptist is granted to Zachary and Elizabeth in their old age, as

[964] A. Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war*, p. 65; cfr. Strauss, *Vie de Jésus*, I, 272–274; *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus*, II, 66–69; O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu*, p. 66; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, I, 47, etc.

Isaac was to Abraham and Sara, and as Samson and Samuel were to their parents.[965] The shepherds of Bethlehem "recall the idyllic period of the patriarchs and David's early occupation." [966] "The poetic idea of the Magi's star was probably suggested to the composers of the legend by a passage in the Book of Numbers (24: 17), where there is question of a star that is to rise out of Jacob." [967] The flight to Egypt and the slaughter of the Innocents were expressly created to provide the Infant Christ with a type, namely, Moses, who was also persecuted in his infancy and saved by divine intervention.[968] But who cannot see that most of the similarities of this sort are fortuitous and superficial? The resemblances proposed concern only the purely external and secondary side of the events of the holy Infancy; this is particularly so in the case of Moses saved from the water, the appearance of an angel to Elizabeth and Mary as to the mother of Samson. As for the essential elements of that same Infancy, such as Christ's virgin birth, His Messianic office, His royal origin,—they are closely connected with the history and prophecies of the Old Testament; but the coincidence was willed by God and necessarily had to happen. St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts, therefore, were not at all subject to a sort of Jewish influence that would give the episodes a legendary existence. Their originality stands as high as their truth. To regard them, without any solid grounds, as "a theological fabrication turned into history," [969] is to pervert and falsify them.

But the critics go still farther. They do not hesitate to ap-

[965] Gen. 18: 5–15; Judges 13: 1–24; 1 Kings chaps. 1 and 2.

[966] Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[967] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 397.

[968] Ex. 2: 1–10. "This portion of the history of the Infancy is evidently formed in accordance with the destiny of the young Moses. The wicked Pharaoh becomes the wicked Herod." R. von Delius, *Jesus, sein Kampf, seine Person und seine Legende*, p. 151; cfr. J. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 67.

[969] Loisy, *Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 331; cfr. Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 2; Hausrath, *Jesus*, II, 61 f., 92.

ply to this portion of Our Lord's life the so-called syncretic or evolutionist theory, according to which the chief elements of the Infancy were taken from the pagan religions of the time,[970] from Buddhism, according to some;[971] from Greek mythology according to others,[972] while still others maintain, from the mysteries of Mithra,[973] or from the ancient Babylonian religion;[974] or, what is still harder to believe, from all these religions at the same time. "For the whole story of the Nativity and Infancy, such as we read it in Matthew [other authors add: and in Luke], it is possible to find, on the occasion of each detail, a pagan substratum."[975] Behold the final verdict! Among the features whose pagan origin is said to be undeniable, these zealous Rationalists place the virgin birth of Christ,[976] the song of the angels, the visit of the Magi and especially their star, the slaughter of the Innocents, and the flight into Egypt.[977]

It goes without saying that the critics are often in total disagreement on these different points. What one derives from Mithraism, another traces to Greek mythology or Babylonism; others simply say its origin is not Jewish. These con-

[970] On the origin and development of this system, which has lately become quite the style, see Fillion, *Les Étapes du Rationalisme*, 296–319.

[971] R. Seydel, *Die Buddha-Legende und das Leben Jesu*, 2d ed., 1907; R. Steck, *Der Einfluss des Buddhismus auf das Christentum*, 1908.

[972] O. Pfleiderer, *Das Christusbild des urchristlichen Glaubens in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung*, 1903; P. Wendland, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum*, 1907.

[973] F. Cumont, *Les Mystères de Mithra*, 2d ed., 1903; J. Grill, *Die persische Mysterienreligion im römischen Reich und das Christentum*, 1903.

[974] A. Jeremias, *Babylonisches im Neuen Testament*, 1905.

[975] Usener, article "Jesus" in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica*, III, 3352 f.; cfr. J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 47, etc.

[976] We shall return to this point later on.

[977] See C. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments*, 1909, pp. 223 f. This Liberal but independent theologian studies all the parallels which the evolutionists have proclaimed between the accounts of the Infancy and pagan religions. Although insisting upon the "hypothetical character of most of the results" which his colleagues regard as final, he unfortunately adopts some of their conclusions.

tradictions, this disunion, show to what extent everything is arbitrary and even "extravagant" [978] in this scheme. We repeat what we said above in connection with supposed Jewish influences, that the resemblances mentioned relative to certain details are simply external and accidental, always imaginary, and that they never reach to the substance of things.[979] How could they, since there exists an essential difference between Christianity and the pagan religions? [980] How can it be supposed, furthermore, that the first Christians, who had such a horror of paganism, applied its symbols to the Infant Jesus? In very truth, "in the history of the Infancy, there is to be found nothing of mythology in the sense of Greek or Oriental myths." [981] At the time when St. Matthew and St. Luke wrote their Gospels, the circumstances of the Infancy were too well known by the faithful to permit of there being inserted any details taken from pagan mythologies, not to speak of the impossibility of ever succeeding in composing pages of such perfect unity with so many borrowed fragments.

Such, then, are the principal objections which contemporary Rationalists have advanced against the historical value of the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Their weakness becomes plainly manifest as soon as they are subjected to a rigid examination. Yet it is important to repeat that dogmatic prejudice,—the denial of the supernatural,—has been their primary cause and serves as their perpetual stimulus. But, in the words of a Protestant theologian of rather Liberal

[978] This is the justly severe adjective used by Knowling, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ,* I, 202.

[979] We shall later on point out some concrete examples.

[980] "When doctrines are mutually so opposed as to be contradictory, we cannot take any account of a few coincidences or a few details in common. Between them there is a difference in their very natures. What then becomes of the parallels which are advanced in opposition to us?" Valensin, *Jésus-Christ et l'Histoire Comparée des Religions,* 1912, p. 84.

[981] Harnack, *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synopt. Evangelien,* p. 110.

tendencies, "neither the miracles in the story of the Infancy, nor its reminiscences of the Old Testament, nor the supposed contradictions between Matthew and Luke [nor the other difficulties that we have endeavored to solve] give a prudent critic any reason to reject that history. Every impartial reader receives the impression that it agrees with an ancient and very sound tradition that did not accept any subsequent detail, but pictured men [and events] as they really existed in the last years of Herod the Great." [982]

XI. The Blessed Virgin's Royal Descent

Nearly all the Liberal theologians deny that the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ belonged to the family of David. They even say that the contrary opinion is nothing more than "an expedient invented in the second century to bring the two genealogies [of Our Lord] into agreement on the supernatural conception." [983] Various orthodox Protestants have joined in that denial. Among the latter it is regrettable to find Dr. Zahn, whose views are usually conservative. He even characterizes as "arbitrary" and "a fable demonstrated by the aid of sophisms," the theory according to which the Mother of Jesus was a "Davidite." [984]

But, as we have just been reminded, the earliest tradition is explicit on this point.[985] St. Ignatius of Antioch,[986] St. Ire-

[982] Barth, *Hauptprobleme des Lebens Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 271. See Durand's excellent work, *L'Enfance du Christ d'après les Évangiles Canoniques,* 1908.

[983] Barth, *op. cit.,* p. 262; cfr. A. Merx, *Die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas,* 1905, p. 181; H. Hillmann, *Jahrbücher für protestant. Theologie,* 1891, p. 252; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 369, etc.

[984] *Das Evangelium des Matth.,* 2d ed., p. 262. See also his commentary on St. Luke's Gospel, pp. 76 f., and especially his *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestam, Kanons,* VI, 326–330.

[985] Cfr. W. Bauer, *Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Apokryphen,* pp. 9–17, and particularly *Weidenauer Studien, herausgegeben von den Professoren des Priesterseminars in Weidenau,* 1911, pp. 1–116.

[986] *Ad Eph.,* XVIII, 2; *Ad Smyrn.,* I, 1; *Ad Trall.,* IX, 1.

naeus,[987] St. Justin Martyr,[988] Tatian,[989] Tertullian,[990] and subsequent writers[991] represent that tradition with all desirable clearness. The Codex Syrus Sinaiticus, whose eccentricities we have pointed out, changes the passage in Luke 2:4 to read as follows: "Because they both were of the family of David."[992] It is not surprising then, that several of the principal apocryphal gospels,—in particular the *Protoevangelium Jacobi* (10) and the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (1) —explicitly place the mother of Christ among the descendants of David. It is true that neither St. Matthew nor St. Luke mentions her royal descent in so many words; but they insinuate it again and again,[993] as St. Paul does also.[994] St. Justin remarks quite truly that only a "Davidite" could transmit the royal blood to Jesus and completely fulfil the prophecy that the Messias would be born of the race of David. "Should not Jesus have appeared to be, and have really been, a descendant of that king? He appears to be so, through him whom the people regarded as His father; He was really so, through her from whom He had His human nature."[995]

Those who decline to regard Mary as a descendant of David and of Juda, connect her with the tribe of Levi.[996] They do so for two reasons. Since the Mother of Christ, as St. Luke[997]

[987] *Adv. Haer.*, III, xvi, 2; xvii, 1; xxvi, 1.

[988] *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 43, 45, 100, 120.

[989] *Diatessaron*, p. 16.

[990] *Adv. Marc.*, III, 17, 20; IV, 1; V, 8; *De Carne Christi*, 22.

[991] Among others, Eusebius, *Demonstr. Evang.*, VII, iii, 10; *Quaest, ad Stephan.*, I, 9.

[992] In the canonical text we read: "Because he [Joseph] was of the house and family of David."

[993] Cfr. Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4.

[994] Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 7:14.

[995] F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de S. Luc*, 2d ed., I, 254 f.

[996] Cfr. H. Ewald, *Die drei ersten Evangelien*, 1850, p. 180; F. Spitta, *Der Brief des Julius Africanus*, 1877, p. 44; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker*, 3d ed., p. 310; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 416, etc.

[997] Luke 1:36.

tells us, was a relative of Elizabeth, who was reckoned "of the daughters of Aaron," they conclude that she, too, must have belonged to the priestly family. The critics regard as "decisive" this argument, which was advanced in the fourth century by the Manichean Faustus and refuted by St. Augustine.[998] But, as we have already said, the relationship of Mary and Elizabeth does not at all imply that the Blessed Virgin was not a scion of the royal race. That relationship came simply from a marriage between a member of the family of David, to which the Mother of Christ belonged, and a descendant of Aaron. In this way, adds the Bishop of Hippo, the Savior belongs to the two noblest tribes of Israel, Juda and Levi.[999]

The critics take their second reason from the apocryphal *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* which, in several passages,[1] announces that the Messias will be born of the tribe of Levi. But in this same book it is written: "I see that from Juda is born a virgin, and from her comes forth a bud without stain." [2] This passage, evidently the work of a Christian hand, can refer only to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, and she is plainly connected with the tribe of Juda. If other texts of the same treatise attribute to the Messias a Levitic origin, it is in a spiritual sense and for the reason just indicated, namely, in order to attribute to Him all the august functions both of priest and of king. This is just what is set forth in *The Testament of Simeon:* "The Lord will make to come forth from Levi a priest, and from Juda a king, God and man."

[998] *Contra Faust.,* XXIII, 1–4, 9.

[999] Cfr. Origen, *Selecta in Num.,* 36:8; St. Hegesippus, *Comment. in Dan.,* 1:12; A. Resch, *Die Kindheitsgeschichte,* pp. 96 f.

[1] Simeon, 7; Gad, 8; Levi, 2; Dan, 5; Joseph, 19.

[2] Juda, 19.

XII. The Supernatural Birth of the Savior

The dogmatic error which, according to modern Rationalists, made a tardy entrance into the accounts of the Infancy,[3] is the virgin birth of Christ. It is acknowledged, however, that this dogma has constantly been, to quote the admission of one of their number, "the common patrimony of the Christian churches, for it is formulated in the ecumenical symbols as well as in the Protestant confessions, in the Roman Catechism as well as in the Catechism of the Socinians." [4] It is certain that true Christians of every denomination would consider they had sacrificed an essential part of their religion if they gave up this article of the Creed, to which every Catholic is particularly happy to subscribe.

Although affirmed with all possible exactness by St. Matthew and St. Luke, and by Christian tradition from its beginnings up to our own day, yet, at various periods in the history of Christianity, the dogma of the virgin birth has found earnest opponents. At present they are more numerous than ever and recently some Protestant pastors in Germany, seconded by university professors, engaged in a press campaign to have this article officially dropped from the Creed of the Lutheran State Church.[5] If they would succeed in having it eliminated, what a brilliant victory they would win, in proving that Jesus is simply the son of Joseph and Mary!

We meet the first opponents of the supernatural birth of Christ among the Jews. It is not likely that the infamous calumny by which they dared to tarnish the fair name of His

[3] See page 544.

[4] Lobstein, *Études Christologiques,* p. 9, note 3.

[5] Harnack and Zahn, scholars of great weight, have taken a stirring part in this strife, the former in attacking (*Das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis,* 1892), the latter in defending (*Das apostolische Symbolum,* 1893) the doctrine of the miraculous birth.

Mother and to regard Him as the offspring of seduction was circulated during His lifetime.[6] His bitterest adversaries never seem to have raised the slightest doubt as to the legitimacy of His birth. He was regarded purely and simply as the son of Joseph, to whom Mary was united in the bonds of matrimony. But after His Ascension, to disgrace Him in the public mind, they invented and spread their revolting falsehood; after it had for a long time circulated from mouth to mouth, it little by little found its way into their writings.[7] According to the Jewish historian H. Graetz,[8] there are traces of its diffusion in the reign of Emperor Hadrian (A. D. 117–138). It is reëchoed in the *Acta Pilati*.[9] As it developed, it passed into the obscene Hebrew pamphlet *Toldoth Ieshu,* from which but recently a certain rabbi published copious extracts.[10] In its present form, this libel seems not to go back beyond the thirteenth century. Educated Jews blush for it. "It is a contemptible thing," says Graetz,[11] and Strauss does not conceal his disgust at it. Voltaire in the eighteenth century,[12] and in our day Haeckel,[13] adopted this vulgar blasphemy and represented it as an authentic fact.[14] Evidently it was from Jewish books that the pagan Celsus, in the second century, adopted this scandalous

[6] See above, pp. 8 sq.

[7] See H. Laible, *Jesus Christus im Talmud,* 1900; H. Strack, *Jesus, die Häretiker und die Christen nach den ältesten jüdischen Angaben,* 1910, pp. 3–39.

[8] *Geschichte der Juden,* 4th ed., III, 243.

[9] See Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha,* p. 224; Brunet, *Les Évangiles Apocryphes,* 2d ed., pp. 234–236.

[10] Samuel Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen,* 1902.

[11] *Op. cit.,* p. 305.

[12] *Examen de Bolingbroke,* chap. X, 11; see Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et la Critique Rationaliste,* 5th ed., II, 309–313.

[13] In his *Welträtsel,* 1903, pp. 377 and 458. Dr. Loofs, a Liberal theologian, published a vigorous reply in a brochure, *Anti-Häckel.*

[14] Cfr. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 368 f. Two Rationalists, Bahrdt and Venturini, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, likewise inserted it in their romantic Lives of Christ. See Fillion, *Les Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 28–33.

story to cast abuse and ridicule on the Founder of Christianity.[15]

About the same period, the dogma of the virgin birth found adversaries in a certain number of false Christians,[16] especially among the Ebionites [17] and Gnostics.[18] But it is particularly in our time that the denial has assumed, in the matter of this sacred doctrine, a hitherto unheard-of extension. Since Strauss and Renan there is not a Rationalist theologian, whether of large or small caliber, who does not attack it, sometimes in subdued tones,[19] sometimes violently.[20] Some have written special pamphlets in which they give their objections free rein.[21]

All these adversaries claim that the virgin birth of Christ is a legend. If this be so, how is it that, save for the rare exceptions mentioned above, it was accepted as a dogma by all

[15] Origen, *Contra Cels.*, I, 28, 32, 37, 39, 66, 71, etc.; Vigouroux, *op. cit.*, I, 140 f.

[16] See W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Apokryphen*, pp. 30–40.

[17] St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 48; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, xxvi, 2; III, xxi, 1; V, i, 3; Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 14; St. Hippolytus, *Philastr.*, 37; St. Epiphanius, *Haer.*, XXX, 2, 3, 14; Origen, *Hom. in Luc.*, XVII.

[18] St. Irenaeus, *Ad. Haer.*, III, ii, 3; Origen, *In Epist. ad Tit.*, etc.

[19] Cfr. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu*, I, 337.

[20] Volkmar, *Jesus Nazarenus und die erste christliche Zeit*, 1880, p. 52: "The idea of the virgin birth is false, it spoils and obscures the whole thing; we must positively free ourselves of it." W. Soltau, *Geburtsgeschichte Jesu*, p. 32: "If anyone hereafter requires that an evangelical Christian affirm his faith in the words 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' he will knowingly participate in a sin against the Holy Spirit of the true Gospel, such as the Apostles and their disciples of the Apostolic age handed it down to us."

[21] The following are the chief ones: P. Lobstein, *Études Christologiques; Le Dogme de la Naissance Miraculeuse du Christ*, 1890 (in German under the title: *Die Lehre von der übernatürlichen Geburt Christi*, 2d ed., 1896); Paul Rohrbach, *Geboren von der Jungfrau, das Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments gegen die Lehre von der übernatürlichen Geburt Jesu Christi*, 5th ed., 1898; W. Soltau, *Die Geburtsgeschichte Jesu Christi*, 1902; E. Petersen, *Die wunderbare Geburt und Kindheit des Heilandes*, 1909; D. Volter, *Die evangelischen Erzählungen der Geburt und Kindheit Jesu kritisch untersucht*, 1911. See also P. W. Schmiedal, *Jungfraugeburt . . . nach den neuesten Funden*, in the *Protestantische Monatshefte*, 1902, Vol. VI, p. 3 and Hillmann, *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, Vol. XVII.

the early Christians, whether they were of Jewish or of pagan birth? All Christian antiquity, as far back as we can go, renders testimony to the Savior's supernatural birth, just as St. Matthew and St. Luke relate it. And this evidence is of extraordinary weight against the Rationalist assertions. "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary": such is the belief attested by Pope Clement at the end of the first century;[22] at the beginning of the second century by St. Ignatius of Antioch[23] and Aristides;[24] a little later by St. Justin,[25] St. Irenaeus,[26] Clement of Alexandria,[27] Origen,[28] Tertullian,[29] St. Hippolytus,[30] the Sibylline Oracles,[31] the apocryphal gospels, etc.[32] Ever since that remote period the virginal conception of Christ has been regarded as an essential point of Christology. And so, along with our own theologians replying to those attacks, there have been Anglican and Protestant scholars who with their whole soul defend this dogma so dear to us.[33] Several of them have even composed special

[22] *Epist ad Cor.*, I, 49:6.

[23] *Ep. ad Smyrn.*, III, 1, 3 and V, 2; *Ep. ad Eph.*, VII, 2; XVIII, 2; XIX, 1; *Ep. ad Trall.*, IX, 1.

[24] *Apol.*, II, 6.

[25] *Apol.*, I 22, 31 f., 33; *Dial. cum Tryph.*, 43, 45, 48, 63, 78, 84, 100, etc.

[26] *Adv. Haer.*, III, xviii, 1; xx, 4; xxii, 1; xxiii, 1; IV, xx, 12; xxxiii, 4.

[27] *Paedagog.*, II, ii, 32; *Strom.*, V, vi, 34, etc.

[28] In numerous passages.

[29] *De Carne Christi*, V, 14 f.; *De Resurrect. Carn.*, II, 18, 51.

[30] *C. Noet.*, 17 f.

[31] I, 324 f.; VIII, 258; XII, 33, etc.

[32] Details may be seen in Zahn, *Das apostol. Symbolum*, pp. 53–68; J. Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, 1907, pp. 136–139, 146–150; A. Durand, *L'Enfance de Jésus-Christ*, pp. 20–34; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Apokryphen*, pp. 29–32, 89–92.

[33] J. Orr, in the excellent volume which we have just cited, on pages 20–22, gives an interesting though incomplete list of them. Among the best known, he mentions, for England, the Anglican bishops Westcott, Lightfoot, and Gore, professors and theologians, Fairbairn, Addis, Swete, Ottley, Knowling, Plummer, Allen; for America, Dr. Philip Schaff and Dr. Briggs; for Germany Tholuck, J. P. Lange, Luthardt, F. Delitzsch, Dorner, Oosterzee, Kähler, Seeberg, Th. Zahn. We may add, for France, E. de Pressensé and Arnal; for Switzerland, F. Godet. Of course, these are only the best known.

works, replying directly and scientifically to the Rationalist objections.[34] Catholic theologians, too, have not failed to protest in works and articles that do them honor.[35]

If we had to prove the miraculous birth of Christ in the manner of a theological thesis, we should point to the reasons of congruity that justify, nay, seem to demand it. True, theologians admit that we could conceive of a Christ, even supposing Him to be God-Man, as engendered according to the ordinary laws of nature, or, on the contrary, as a second Adam, entering into the world after the manner of the first, by a creative act of God.[36] Nevertheless, we may, with due respect, say that in the mind of God this mystery was a manifest corollary of that of the Incarnation. It would have been unbecoming for the eternal Son of the infinite God, who deigned to be "made of a woman," to be conceived like other men. Certainly, on no hypothesis would the Incarnate Word have shared in original sin, which enters every human soul by the very fact of generation. The virgin birth, on the other hand, is in perfect conformity with the Savior's unique position and absolute holiness. Born of a virgin who was conceived without sin, He was clothed with a pure and holy flesh. He is a man as we are, but without the shadow or semblance of stain. Lastly, He is the ideal man, the second Adam, the man from Heaven,[37] as the first Adam was an earthly man formed of the earth. He is the head of the new

[34] Among others, we mention T. Mandel, *Die wunderbare Zeugung,* 1893; B. Randolph, *The Virgin Birth of Our Lord,* 1903; J. Kreyher, *Die jungfräuliche Geburt das Herrn,* 1904; R. Grützmacher, *Die Jungfrauengeburt,* 1906; R. Knowling, *Our Lord's Virgin Birth and the Criticism of To-day,* 1907, and Orr's work (see note 32 *supra*), the most complete of all.

[35] To Durand's work we may add Lagrange's paper, *"La Conception Surnaturelle du Christ d'après S. Luc,"* in the *Revue Biblique,* 1914, pp. 60–91, 184–209; Mangenot, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* 1911, pp. 89–140; Steinmetzer, *Die Geschichte der Geburt und Kindheit Christi und ihr Verhältnis zur babylonischen Mythe,* 1910.

[36] Durand, *op. cit.,* pp. 12 f.

[37] 1 Cor. 15:47.

humanity which, thanks to Him, is destined to attain a relative perfection. This fact also supposes an ideal and unique origin. While related to the human race through His mother, it was proper, therefore, that Jesus should not have a father according to nature, and that in every way He should be the Son of God.[38]

However impressive this congruity may be, it is principally with the Gospel text we are here concerned, since that is what the unbelievers directly attack. Now, the meaning of that text is as plain as possible. No one denies that the supernatural birth of Christ is the central idea of St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels. Although the two Evangelists are totally independent of each other, both of them group all the details of the holy Infancy around this marvelous fact. In both narratives an angel announces (in one account, to Joseph; in the other, to Mary) the heavenly origin of the Divine Infant, even before He is conceived. In both it is affirmed that Joseph has no rights over Mary's Son except those of a legal or foster father. The terms used in the two genealogies of Jesus expressly imply the same fact. In one case it is said that "Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, *of whom was born Jesus,* who is called Christ";[39] in the other, that "Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being (*as it was supposed*) the son of Joseph."[40] In the episodes of the Magi and of the flight to Egypt, the sacred writer repeats five times in succession that Mary is the Mother of the Child,[41] while Joseph is simply the guardian and protector of them both. In St. Luke's narrative the prominence given to the virgin birth is still more accentuated. Mary is only Joseph's betrothed

[38] For a beautiful development of this thought, see Monsabré, *Conférences de Notre Dame de Paris,* Lent 1880, pp. 31–36, and St. Thomas, *Summa Theolog.,* 3a, qu. 28, art. 1; qu. 31, art. 1–4.

[39] Matt. 1:16.

[40] Luke 3:23.

[41] Matt. 2:11, 13 f., 20 f.

bride when she receives the divine message.[42] The Child who is promised her is to be born without the co-operation of any man and will be the Son of God.[43] Mary alone, with Jesus, is the subject of Simeon's prophecy.[44] At the time of the finding of her Child in the Temple, it is she who again plays the principal part.[45] Joseph is left largely in the shade. In a word, in the first two chapters of St. Luke all the events "are ordained toward the great mystery [of the virgin birth] ; that is the chief and almost only miracle . . . It is impossible to misunderstand either the perfect unity of that literary composition or the idea, or rather central fact, which it aims to throw into relief." [46] If our readers will carefully review the accounts devoted to the Holy Infancy in the First and Third Gospel, they will easily note with what pains the two sacred writers insist on this fact of the Messias' virgin birth.[47]

Thus, then, we could not call for greater exactness on the part of the historians of Christ's Infancy regarding the nature of His birth. It took place without the co-operation of a human father; its sole cause was the creative act of the Holy Ghost.[48]

[42] Luke 1:27.

[43] Luke 1:34 f.

[44] Luke 2:34.

[45] Luke 2:48.

[46] Lagrange, in the *Revue Biblique*, 1914, pp. 201 f.

[47] For example, Luke 1:27, it is twice repeated that Mary was a virgin at the time of the Annunciation, and consequently at the time of the Incarnation. We have already mentioned the remarkable reading, "his betrothed wife" (Luke 2:5). If this theme were to be treated with thoroughness, three other facts would be deserving of note: (1) John the Baptist's conception is presented by the Evangelist as a real miracle; if that of Jesus had taken place according to the common law, the Messias would be placed in a position of relative inferiority to His precursor; (2) the angel Gabriel, wishing to give Mary a proof that nothing is impossible to God, informs her that Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years, will have a son. What would be the import of these words if Joseph's betrothed were to bring forth a son under ordinary conditions? (3) Elizabeth felicitates her cousin for having believed; but this compliment supposes that Mary's faith had, like the angel's promise, an extraordinary import.

[48] Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35.

What attitude do the critics take in the presence of these explicit texts? It is not logically possible to neglect these texts or to distort their meaning. First of all, in so far as concerns the angel's reply to Mary's question, "How shall this be done?" [49] they have recourse to a very easy procedure, which they employ every now and then to rid themselves of troublesome passages of Scripture. They reject the two verses as an interpolation, declaring that the Evangelist altered the primitive document that served as a basis for his narrative. In the original document, they say, Jesus was presented without ambiguity as the son of Joseph and Mary; but St. Luke retouched it, introducing the idea of the virgin birth.[50]

But such a suppression is contrary to all the rules of criticism, textual and literary, and consequently is utterly inadmissible. The passages these critics arbitrarily reject are found in all the early manuscript codices and in all the versions. Never, until the recent attacks of the Rationalists, did any scientific editor of the New Testament think of eliminating them.[51] We can trace them back to the beginning of the second century without any break and always in their present form. Moreover, the style of verses 34–35 is the same as that of the whole account of the Infancy in the Third Gospel and is char-

[49] Luke 1:34 f.

[50] H. J. Holtzmann, we believe, was the first to discover this means of destroying the passage, Luke 1:34 f. See the *Hand-Kommentar zum N. Test.,* 1st ed., 1889, I, 31 f., and *Neutestam. Theologie,* 1897, I, 412 f. Hillmann undertook to prove this strange assertion in the *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie,* XVII (1891), 225–240. Harnack gave his approval to the theory, in the *Zeitschrift für neutestam. Wissenschaft,* II (1901), 53–60. He proposes to suppress entirely the two troublesome verses, to eliminate the word "virgin" in Luke 1:27, and the parenthesis, "as it was supposed," in Luke 3:23. After this has been done, he says, St. Luke's account will nowhere suppose the virgin birth. See also, in this same sense, H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen im Leben Jesu,* 1904, pp. 107 f.; A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 145; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 387.

[51] They are to be found also in *Griechisches Neues Testament, Text mit kurzem Apparat,* 1913, by H. von Soden, one of the most prominent modern critics, pp. 112 and 118.

acterized by its Hebraic coloring. These verses connect in the most natural way with the neighboring verses. To find any pretext for an interpolation, one must be determined by all means to exclude the virgin birth from St. Luke's account. But such treatment is not only arbitrary, but it avails nothing, since St. Matthew's Gospel confirms the miraculous birth of Jesus.[52] In fact, as we have seen, it is precisely these two verses that form the very nucleus of St. Luke's account and in all truth it can be said that "to suppress them is to remove the diamond and leave only the setting." [53] Recourse to interpolation is, therefore, as futile as it is uncalled-for; and this has been acknowledged by several of the most influential critics,[54] who have declined to lend their support to this theory.

Let us pass on to St. Matthew's account, in connection with which about thirty years ago, a sharp discussion arose of which the echoes are still audible. In 1892 there was discovered in the library of the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, and published two years later, a Syriac manuscript of the Gospels, seemingly of very great antiquity. At the close of the Savior's genealogy,[55] it has, in place of our present Greek text, this variant, which was already known through a few isolated witnesses,[56] but to which no importance had been attached: "Joseph, to whom the Virgin Mary was betrothed, begot Jesus, who is called the Christ." The unbelievers at once shouted with joy, for they claimed that this text was certainly

[52] It is true that efforts have been made to remove this difficulty, sometimes by affirming, with J. Weiss (*Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 217) that in Matt. 1 : 18 the words "of the Holy Ghost" are perhaps merely an interpolation, sometimes by removing *in toto* the first two chapters, as do several critics (Wellhausen among others).

[53] Feine, *Eine vorkanonische Ueberlieferung des Lukas*, 1891, p. 29. See Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas ausgelegt*, pp. 77–81; Bardenhewer, *Mariä Verkündigung*, pp. 13–15.

[54] Among others, C. Clemen, in the *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1902, p. 299, and Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des N. T.*, p. 68.

[55] Matt. 1 : 16.

[56] Notably by the Latin *Codex Vercellensis.*

the earliest of all—a claim that was impossible to prove—and that it is incompatible with the dogma of the virgin birth. Since then the Rationalist exegetes have taken advantage of this text to bolster their thesis.[57]

But the world of scholars loudly protested against this hasty verdict. It has been proven that the reading of the Codex Syrus Sinaiticus, as it is called, is solitary and devoid of authority, and that no sound conclusion can be drawn from it as to the primitive text.[58] Out of a simple question of textual criticism the Rationalists recklessly made a question of historical facts, for which they have been quite justly blamed.[59] In an obviously faulty translation they pretend to find an argument against the miraculous birth of Christ, so well attested in other quarters. In fact, this singular reading, and two other variants of the same sort that occur somewhat further on (*Matt.* 1:21, "She will bear thee a son"; and 1:25, "She bore him a son") clearly show the purpose that directed the translator's pen: he wanted to point out at the same time the virginal character of Christ's birth (he explicitly notes that Mary was a virgin) and Joseph's legal title. His thought was this: The Son of the Virgin Mary, although He has no father accord-

[57] In this sense A. Merx has published a translation and commentary of the *Codex Syrus Sinaiticus, Die vier kanonischen Evangelien nach ihren ältesten bekannten Texte,* Part I, 1902, see pages 5–25, and also H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 310, and *Neutestamentliche Theologie,* 2d ed., I, 480–487; O. Schmiedel, *Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-Forschung,* 2d ed., p. 45; A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 323–325; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 216. As always happens, third-rate popularizers draw the most exorbitant conclusions. One of them, W. Hess, writes, in his little work, *Jesus von Nazareth in seiner geschichtlichen Lebensentwicklung,* 1906, p. 3: "Since . . . in the most ancient document, the Syriac translation of the Gospels recently discovered at Sinai, Joseph is mentioned . . . as the real father of Jesus, anything said on this question would be superfluous."

[58] In their famous edition, *The New Testament in Greek,* 1896, II, 328, Westcott and Hort wrote that it cannot be admitted, on sound critical grounds, that the reading of the *Syrus Sinaiticus* represents the true text of the Greek Gospel. Cfr. F. Burkitt, *Evangelion da Mepharreshe,* II, 262 f.

[59] F. Burkitt, *op. cit.,* p. 262.

ing to the flesh, is also, according to Jewish law, the son of Joseph, who hands on to Him all his rights. It is possible, too, that we have here the simple error of a copyist, who mechanically repeated the verb "begot," in place of "was begotten" or "was born." In any event, "there can be no doubt but that St. Matthew wishes to inform us that Jesus was conceived by Mary while she was a virgin . . . The entire passage, 1 : 18–25, is based on this supposition," [60] and this whole passage is in the Syrus Sinaiticus, with the shades of meaning we have indicated. Evidently the translator would not contradict himself within the space of a few lines. We have a right, then, to conclude that the discovery of the Sinaitic manuscript has shed no new light on the virgin birth.[61]

It is assuredly "the height of arbitrariness to try to transform the most ancient monuments of the Christian faith, the New Testament accounts themselves, into witnesses of the new ideas," [62] that is, Rationalist ideas. We have just observed the critics at this sort of work, laboring to give St. Matthew's and St. Luke's texts a meaning that would fit into their own theories. In order to attain this same end, they quote other passages of the Sacred Books, interpreted after their own fashion, containing, as they declare, expressions and facts that clearly contradict the dogma of the virgin birth.

The words in question are far from being as numerous and conclusive as our adversaries would like to make believe. There are eight examples, four of which belong to the history of the Infancy and four to the public life of Christ. The former are supplied by St. Luke, who in three places [63] makes mention of the Savior's "parents." On another occasion we hear Mary say to her Son: "Behold thy father and I have sought

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 258. Cf. T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, pp. 67–69; *Einleitung in das N. T.*, 2d ed., II, 292.

[62] Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[63] Luke 2 : 27, 41, 43.

thee . . ." [64] The conclusion from these words simply is that St. Luke did not consider them incompatible with the fact of Christ's miraculous conception. Was not Joseph, in consequence of his marriage to the Blessed Virgin, the foster-father of Jesus? Had he not the right to treat Him as his son? The sequel shows how faithfully he discharged his office.

The other four examples show us the remarks of the people on the subject of the Savior's origin. *Matt.* 13: 55, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" the people of Nazareth ask one another; *Luke* 4: 22, under similar circumstances, "Is not this the son of Joseph?"; *John* 1: 45, Philip announces to Nathanael: "We have found him of whom Moses . . . did write, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth"; *John* 6: 42, the Jews say to one another: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" It is plain that these words merely repeat the popular opinion, which was justified by appearances. They do not express the belief of the sacred writers or of the documents used by them, as the critics falsely claim.[65] By inserting these passages into their narratives, the Evangelists well knew they would be understood by their readers without difficulty. These instances of apparent inconsistency are but another proof of their candor and truthfulness.[66]

[64] Luke 2: 48.

[65] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 320; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 389.

[66] See St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 88; Julius Africanus, in Eusebius, *H. E.,* I, vii, 4; Origen, *Contra Cels.,* II, 1, 2–3 and *Hom. in Luc.,* 18. "Once the reality of the situation is clearly set forth, what is more natural than to use the terms which characterized it for the public? Luke could not keep telling us at every line that Christ was not the son of Joseph. Moreover, Joseph, being Mary's husband, had real paternal rights." Lagrange, in the *Revue Biblique,* 1895, p. 179. Cfr. Knabenbauer, *Commentar. in Evang. sec. Luc.,* 2d ed., p. 133, quite justly regards these objections as *miserrima effugia.* In the passage Luke 2: 33, the version of the *Codex Syrus Sinaiticus* uselessly replaces the words "his father and mother" by "Joseph and his mother." This detail is a still further evidence of the unusual and imperfect character of this translation.

Let us now consider the facts by which the critics seek to sustain their thesis. They first point to the surprise which Mary and Joseph show on two different occasions. After Simeon's canticle, St. Luke adds that the parents of Jesus "were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him."[67] In a later passage, at the time of His finding in the Temple, after quoting the Divine Child's reply to His Mother and St. Joseph ("Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"), the Evangelist remarks: "They understood not the word that he spoke unto them."[68] The Rationalist theologians maintain that this failure to understand is incomprehensible if Christ's human origin was really the result of a prodigy. Could His parents have forgotten what had taken place at Bethlehem? Their forgetting, we are told, also shows that the primitive document has been altered by the introduction of a new element, contradicting it in many places.[69]

But there is neither incoherence nor contradiction in St. Luke's account. Without at all forgetting any of the events that preceded and accompanied Christ's divine birth, Mary and Joseph had ample reason for surprise and wonder when, of a sudden, Simeon, a man unknown to them, showed that he was fully aware of the mystery of the Child's origin and future office. Likewise, is there anything surprising in the fact that Jesus' parents did not fully grasp His reply to them in the Temple? As we noted above, this reply was wonderfully profound. In truth, when we study it closely, we are "invincibly led" to see in it "a striking contrast" between Christ's parents and God the Father. Do not the words, "My Father,"

[67] Luke 2:22.

[68] Luke 2:50.

[69] See E. Reuss, *Synopse Évangélique*, p. 149; Lobstein, *Die Lehre von der übernatürl. Geburt Jesu.* p. 13; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, II, 372 and 407; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 397; Soltau, *Unsere Evangelien*, p. 78, etc.

contrasted with Mary's words, "Thy father and I," constitute, contrary to the Rationalist assertion, "a very strong argument in favor of the supernatural conception of Christ?" [70]

The critics also adduce the unbelief of Christ's "brethren," and even what they call the unbelief of His own mother.[71] It is true that the Evangelists report that a certain number of His near relations for a while refused to believe in His mission.[72] But this opposition may be explained in two ways. First, everything leads us to suppose that before His Ascension they shared the ignorance of all their countrymen on the subject of His miraculous origin. Moreover, as He refused to lend Himself to the realization of the foolish hopes which they had founded on Him at the most brilliant period of His ministry, they, along with a great part of the people, ceased to believe in Him, and even treated Him harshly. As to His mother, it would be supremely unjust to associate her with that unbelief and to attribute to her any part whatever in the episode briefly recorded by St. Mark, 3:21: "His friends . . . went out to lay hold on him. For they said: He is become mad." [73]

In a final effort, the Liberal theologians exploit the silence which prevails in all the New Testament writings, except the Gospels of SS. Matthew and Luke, regarding the Savior's virgin birth.[74]

We have already taken occasion to remark how weak the

[70] Lagrange, *loc. cit.*, pp. 181 f.

[71] K. Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, 2d ed., pp. 229 f.; Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., I, 155 f.; R. Otto, *Leben und Wirken Jesu*, p. 25; Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war*, pp. 32 f.; C. Clemen, *Der geschichtliche Jesus*, p. 50.

[72] Mark 3:21; John 7:5.

[73] We will return to this in its proper chronological place.

[74] See H. J. Holtzmann, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, II, 420; H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen im Leben Jesu*, p. 107; Harnack, *Wesen des Christentums*, 1903 ed., p. 20; Usener, in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica*, III, 3444; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 46; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 140;

argumentum e silentio is unless it can be demonstrated that those, whose silence is considered significant, had a strict obligation to break it. Now, it is not possible to demonstrate in the case of St. Mark, St. John, St. Paul, and the other New Testament writers that they were under obligation to mention the fact which is here in question, as at least one opponent of the virgin birth admits.[75] We will content ourselves with this reply, begging the reader to refer back to the general explanations given above.[76]

The critics are not satisfied with arguing positively and negatively against the statements contained in the texts that relate the virgin birth of Christ. To attack this dogma directly, they go in search of its origin, which they locate in three different surroundings, attributing it, some to Jewish, others to pagan influences, still others to primarily Christian influences, more or less stimulated by Judaic or pagan concepts. Up to this point the opponents of the supernatural birth are wholly in accord; but here they part company, separating into several hostile camps: this circumstance is far from being a guaranty of the soundness of their theories, since they contradict and upset one another.

1. According to the first theory, the Old Testament books furnished the greater part of the Gospel material on this point. We find therein several children (Isaac, Samson, Samuel) born under miraculous circumstances. For the Messias, a still more wonderful birth was needed; hence, in His case, a mother conceived Him without ceasing to be a virgin.[77] This objection

O. Schmiedel, *Hauptprobleme der Leben-Jesu-Forschung,* 2d ed., p. 44; Heitmüller, in Gunkel and Schiele's *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* III, 362; Guignebert, *Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne du Christianisme,* p. 165.

[75] J. Warschauer, *Jesus, Seven Questions,* p. 71; cfr. Digges de la Touche, *Christian Certitude, Its Intellectual Basis,* 1910, pp. 153–158; J. Orr, *Virgin Birth,* pp. 105–122; A. Durand, *L'Enfance de Jésus-Christ,* pp. 98–130.

[76] Page 521, 538 sqq.

[77] Pfleiderer, *Urchristentum,* 2d ed., p. 368; Hausrath, *Jesus,* II, 117; Otto, *Leben und Wirken Jesu,* p. 24; E. Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 47, etc.

is easy to answer; there is no parity between the facts thus paralleled. To be born without the co-operation of a human father and to be born of aged or barren parents, are two entirely different things; thus the alleged examples lead to no sound conclusion.

Our opponents also cite, apparently with better reason, the prophecy of the *'almah,*[78] or virgin mother, as having given rise, in the minds of the early Christians, to the notion of the Savior's miraculous birth.[79] In agreement with St. Matthew, we believe that this prophecy applies to the Messias, and to Him alone; but we cannot admit that it could have suggested to the two Evangelists of the Infancy the idea of inventing the facts which they group about it. Those who have most carefully studied the Jewish literature of Our Lord's time, assure us that at that period "the Jewish people did not at all expect a Messias born of a virgin and that, in the rabbinical writings of the time, there cannot be found, relative to the prophecy of Isaias (7: 14), any trace of a Messianic interpretation from which the account of Christ's supernatural conception might have originated." [80] It was in the light of the facts, and also by the revealing light of the Spirit of God, that St. Matthew applied that prophecy to the Messias.

The idea of such a mystery could not have sprung up on Jewish soil. The supernatural origin of the Messias, as related by St. Matthew and St. Luke, was diametrically opposed to the very strict and jealous monotheism of the Jews, which could not have accepted, much less invented, the idea that God, even in the loftiest sense, could become directly the agent of a human birth.[81] We should add that the Jews never had any

[78] Is. 7: 14.

[79] Cfr. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte,* 2d ed., I, 95; Lobstein, *Die Lehre . . . ,* pp. 28 and 31; J. H. Holtzmann, *Die neutestam. Theologie,* 2d ed., I, 483, etc.

[80] G. Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 226.

[81] Lagrange, *Revue Biblique,* 1914, p. 69; "The very basis of the idea . . . does

great esteem for virginity, which is nowhere praised in the Old Testament, but, on the contrary, highly esteemed marriage as a divine institution for the procreation of children.[82]

2. The dogma of the Savior's miraculous birth is, therefore, not the result of Jewish influences. Might it have been a pagan importation? About the end of the second century such was the thesis of Celsus, a sworn enemy of Christianity, who blamed the Greek myths of Danae, Auge, Antiope, etc.,[83] for the account of Christ's nativity, and claimed that it had antecedents and rivals in the pagan religions.[84]

Many Liberal theologians repeat this objection with even greater emphasis. According to them, the virgin birth of Christ is a product of paganism, a legend that has no more consistency than the like instances with which the literatures of Greece and Rome abound and of which traces are also found in the literatures of India, Persia, Egypt, and Babylonia.[85] The protagonists of this theory set it forth with vari-

not accord . . . with Jewish theology in what constitutes the special originality of the latter, namely, the notion of divine transcendence, which scarcely permits God to be conceived as the chief generator, both physical and immediate, of an individual human life." Cfr. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 292.

[82] Cfr. Ps. 127; Prov. 5:15–19, etc.

[83] Origen, *Contra Cels.,* I, 37.

[84] St. Justin, *Apol.,* I, 21, Tertullian, *Apol.,* 12, 15, 21, and Origen, *loc. cit.,* also compared our Lord's birth to that of heroes and demigods born of a god and a mortal woman. But it does not follow therefrom, as Loisy would have it (*Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 292), that they found that comparison natural. On the contrary, they emphasize the complete disparity between the births in question: the one is altogether pure and heavenly, the others are the result of indecency; the one is real, the others are only lies. In making such a comparison, they had an apologetic aim and were arguing *ad hominem:* You cannot refuse to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a virgin, since you admit that Perseus and others of your heroes had gods for fathers. It would be supremely unjust to attribute any other thought to them.

[85] See Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen,* 1889, I, 69–72, and the article *"Geburt und Kindheit Christi,"* in the *Zeitschrift für neutestam. Wissenschaft,* 1903, pp. 15–25; Hillmann, *"Die Kindheitsgeschichte Jesu"* in the *Jahrbücher für protestant. Theologie,* 1891, pp. 225–233; O. Pfleiderer, *The Early Christian Conception of Christ,* 1905, pp. 29–31; H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestam. Theologie,* 2d ed., I, 485; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 218,

ous shades of disagreement, all regarding the dogma of Christ's supernatural conception as something taken, either directly or indirectly, from the pagan religions through the intermediary of Gentiles converted to Christianity.

We must enter into some detail, not, however, without protesting against the audacity of those critics who place myths, oftentimes sensual and even coarse, side by side with the most chaste mysteries. They allege popular beliefs which, to explain the superior qualities of certain great men, assign them gods for fathers,—making, for instance, Alexander the Great and Scipio the Elder to be sons of Jupiter; Pythagoras, Plato, and Emperor Augustus, sons of Apollo; or the Egyptian legend according to which King Amenophis was the son of the god Amon-Ra; or the Greek fables, mentioned above, regarding Danae, Antiope, etc.; or lastly, various vague and obscure details which are related in the Babylonian annals.[86]

How many considerations, fatal to this mythological theory, might here be set down! The three following will amply suffice to disclose its improbability, or rather impossibility. (1) Those tales do not contain the shadow of a historical element. They are the offspring of credulity or base flattery, and bear on their face the brand of falsity. They are stories worthy of a buffoon, as Origen told Celsus,[87] and not of a man writ-

387, and *Christus, die Anfänge des Dogmas,* 1909, pp. 80–82; Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* pp. 42–45; W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos, Geschichte des christlichen Glaubens,* 1918, p. 329; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 339; Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels,* p. 125; Gunkel, *Zum religionsgesch. Verständnis des N. T.,* p. 65. Cfr. C. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtl. Erklärung des N. T.,* pp. 223–231.

[86] On this last point, see Steinmetzer's scholarly and interesting work, *Die Geschichte der Geburt und Kindheit Christi und ihr Verhältnis zur babylonischen Mythe,* 1910, pp. 415–66. After a careful examination of the texts advanced by certain Assyriologists, the author concludes, p. 202: "The idea of the virgin birth nowhere appears in Babylonian mythology." In a work entitled *Babylonisches im Neuen Testament,* p. 48, Dr. Jeremias, although at times over-Liberal, rejects "utterly the view that the Christian tradition of the virgin birth was a product of Oriental (Babylonian) myth."

[87] *Contra Cels.,* I, 37.

ing in a serious vein. What intelligent man believed that Plato was the son of Apollo, or that Alexander was the son of Jupiter? Were not the parents of Augustus, Pythagoras, and the other so-called virgin-sons perfectly well known? (2) The Gospel accounts make us admire in Mary a miraculously divine maternity along with ideal virginity. In the legendary accounts to which the critics brazenly refer us, the notion of virginity is always excluded and the gods often are fathers only by indecency, seduction, or at times adultery and incest, as Tertullian, in tones of vigorous reproach, said to their blind adorers.[88] What is there in common between these infamies and the most pure birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ? And yet, "certain scholars try to prove that the pagan spirit injected its most absurd lucubrations into Christianity!" [89] (3) No matter to what religion they belonged before their conversion, whether they had been Jews or pagans, the early Christians never would have consented to apply to Jesus, even remotely, concepts which were apt to inspire nothing but disgust.

Thus we see that no mythological influence, coming from Greek countries or from the East, made itself felt on primitive Christianity, directly or indirectly, so as to introduce therein the dogma of the miraculous birth of its Founder.

3. According to a third theory,[90] belief in the virginal conception of Christ arose in the primitive Church rather spontaneously by the gradual transformation of an idea into a fact. This article of the Creed, they tell us, "was inspired by religious faith, created by popular imagination, sanctioned by the hermeneutics of the school," and it "takes its place in the historical development of the person of Christ." [91] The Ra-

[88] *Apol.*, 21; see Lagrange, *Revue Biblique*, 1914, p. 63.
[89] Lagrange, *loc. cit.*, p. 65.
[90] Some critics attach it more or less to the first or second.
[91] Lobstein, *Études Christologiques*, p. 33.

tionalist theologians are so keen-visioned that, without other proofs than their personal speculations and their antipathy for the miraculous, under whatever form it appears, they can describe the different stages by which the faith of the early Christians reached the point of saying joyously and piously: "I believe in Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary." Dr. Harnack devotes a few pages to this topic in one of his recent works.[92] The words of the Creed, *"Conceptus de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria virgine,"* he says, nowise correspond with the primordial condition of the Christian faith. Historically they had at least three preliminary phases. The first is marked by St. Paul's expression, "[Jesus Christ] who was predestinated the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead";[93] the second, by the history of Christ's Transfiguration, where we read: "This is my beloved Son";[94] the third by the history of the Baptism, which shows the Holy Ghost descending upon Jesus and uttering the same words.[95] From the time that Jesus was risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven (according to the Christian hypothesis), His disciples were firmly convinced that He was the Son of God in the strict sense. Their "reflections" began at once to construct a basis for this belief and to develop it. Harnack gives us a very concrete echo of these so-called "reflections" when he says: "It was at the time of His resurrection that He became the Son of God. No! it was at the time of His Baptism. No! it was at the very first moment of His appearance on earth."[96]

[92] *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien,* pp. 99–105. Keim devotes a long treatment to this subject (*Geschichte Jesu,* I, 338–360). See also Pfleiderer, *Entstehung des Christentums,* p. 118; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 194 f., etc.

[93] Rom. 1 : 4.

[94] Matt. 17 : 5.

[95] Matt. 3 : 17.

[96] *Op. cit.,* p. 100.

But what proof have these critics of that retrospective process which the faith of the early disciples is supposed to have followed so as to reach the dogma of their Master's virgin birth? Where are the "reflections" tardily made? Where is the "dogmatic speculation" which Rationalism so often sees in the Gospels and other New Testament writings? Its thesis is a pure work of the imagination, with no historic basis, and it is absolutely undemonstrable. Nowhere in the accounts of the holy Infancy or elsewhere in the New Testament do we perceive the least trace of a theological speculation on the point in question. The Evangelists mention Christ's divine nature only *en passant;* on the other hand, they treat at length the humiliations of Jesus, who is born in a stable, is laid in a manger, persecuted by Herod, obliged to escape death by flight, who lives poor and hidden at Nazareth. The Gospel accounts do not establish any correlation between His divinity or His holiness and His miraculous birth; they contain nothing to arouse our mistrust.

Let us now conclude. We have impartially examined the difficulties raised by the critics against the fact of the Savior's virgin birth and against those pages of St. Matthew and St. Luke which recount it, and we have observed that all these attacks are futile. It is an audacious scaffolding, but it falls to pieces under the blows of sound argument. Neither Jesus nor Mary lose the virginal halo, and it will ever remain true that the beginning of the Savior's human existence, like its close, was marked by the most glorious of miracles.

XIII. Mary's Perpetual Virginity

The critics who deny the supernatural birth of Christ, are even less willing to admit that Mary and Joseph lived together as brother and sister after His birth. On the part of the Rationalists, that denial is not at all surprising. But it is sad to

observe that even those Protestant theologians and exegetes who usually show themselves conservative, nearly all reject the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity.[97] They do not comprehend its evident and imperative congruity, which we have pointed out. Like Helvidius of old, with whom St. Jerome had a stormy discussion on this subject,[98] they rest their opinion on three principal reasons.

1. The formula which St. Matthew here employs[99] (οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως . . . ; Vulg., *non cognoscebat eam donec . . .*) is in itself enough to contradict the Catholic thesis. It proves that after the Savior's birth, Mary and Joseph lived like wife and husband. But these exegetes have not reflected that the conjunction ἕως οὗ, like the Hebrew *'ad-ki,* or the Latin *donec,* while expressing what has occurred up to a certain period, leaves the future entirely aside. *"Ita negant præteritum,"* St. Jerome well says, *"ut non ponant futurum."* The examples in support of this assertion are abundant in the writings of the Old and New Testament. St. Jerome cites them for the benefit of his adversary. In Genesis 8: *7,* we read: "Noe, opening the window of the ark which he had made, sent forth a raven, which went forth and did not return, till the waters were dried up upon the earth." Does it follow that the raven returned afterwards? The following passage from Psalm 109: 1,[100] is famous: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool." Once His enemies are subdued, will the Messias relinquish His place of honor?[101] The Evangelist, in speaking as he did, therefore, nowise supposes that the abstention mentioned by him did not continue after the expiration of the time indicated. And let us

[97] This is so in the case of Th. Zahn, Allen, Plummer, the latest Protestant commentators on the First Gospel.

[98] See Jerome's *Liber adversus Helvidium, de Perpetua Virginitate B. Mariae.*

[99] Matt. 1: 25.

[100] In the Hebrew, 110.

[101] See also Is. *22*: 14; Matt. 12: 20; 1 Tim. 4: 13, etc.

note well: what St. Matthew especially purposed telling his readers at this point evidently is that Joseph had no part in the birth of Mary's Child; hence he confines himself to stating that fact. In itself, the phrase here involved does not prove the subsequent virginity of the mother of Christ, a circumstance with which the Evangelist had no occasion to concern himself directly; but even less does it contain an argument against her perpetual virginity. According to St. John Chrysostom, the readers of the First Gospel well understand, if their mind is not disturbed by prejudice, that the sacred writer, after insisting so strongly on Mary's anterior virginity in his first lines, could not mean to imply that it ceased later on, and that the angelic union which he had just related should be considered after the manner of ordinary marriages.

2. It is not certain that, in the sentence on which our opponents base their argument ("He knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn Son"), the adjective πρωτότοκον, *primogenitum,* is authentic, for some important manuscripts omit it. But St. Luke uses it in connection with the birth of our Lord,[102] and it is argued that this word cannot be reconciled with Mary's perpetual virginity. Lucian, one of the earliest adversaries of the Gospel, wrote mockingly:[103] Εἰ μὲν πρῶτος οὐ μόνος, εἰ δὲ μόνος οὐ πρῶτος, *i. e.,* If He is the first, He is not the only one; if He is the only one, He is not the first. He is both πρῶτος καὶ μόνος, "first and only," we answer with the Greek commentator Theophylact. As St. Jerome said to Helvidius, "a firstborn son is not only he after whom there is no other child, but he before whom there was no other." It would be impossible to give a stricter definition of this adjective. Among the Jews particularly, continues St. Jerome, the term had this special meaning because their firstborn were consecrated to God by the very fact of their birth and had to be redeemed at a

[102] Luke 2:7.
[103] *Demonax,* 29.

price:[104] whether they were the only son or whether they had brothers and sisters, made little difference. And the learned doctor concludes with implacable logic: "The firstborn is he who opens his mother's womb, and not he who has brothers." It is, then, according to the Bible itself that we should here interpret St. Luke, and the Bible does so with the greatest clearness. The adjective "firstborn" consequently leaves intact the question of Mary's perpetual virginity, a question with which the Evangelists of the Infancy are not directly concerned.

3. The Rationalists adduce as an unanswerable argument against us the various passages in the Gospels and other New Testament writings, where there is mention of the "brothers" of Our Lord. We shall reply to this objection later, when these brethren appear on the scene. Let it suffice here to say that they are not children of Mary and Joseph, but simply cousins of Christ, called brethren according to the broad usage of the Biblical Orient.

The Rationalists' efforts are in vain; no one will ever succeed in robbing the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the title of ἀεὶ παρθένος, "ever virgin," inserted into the Apostles' Creed in the form it had taken at Antioch.[105]

XIV. The Objection That Christ was Born, not at Bethlehem, but at Nazareth

St. Matthew and St. Luke both say in explicit terms that Christ was born at Bethlehem,[106] so that one cannot help being startled at seeing the critics reject this assertion of two reliable historians and locate the Savior's birthplace, not in Judea, in the ancient city of David, but at Nazareth in Galilee. Renan says: "Jesus was born at Nazareth . . . and it is not

[104] Ex. 34:19 f.; Num. 18:15.
[105] Likewise in the Athanasian Creed; cfr. Denzinger, *Enchiridion.*
[106] Matt. 2:1–8; Luke 2:1–18.

without an awkward roundabout procedure that the legend has Him born at Bethlehem." [107] Keim, Pfleiderer, and H. J. Holtzmann [108] say the same thing, and the popularizers add their voice to take from Bethlehem its glory now nineteen centuries old. Says Guignebert: "From the historical point of view no doubt is possible: Jesus was born at Nazareth." [109] The consequences that would follow from this mistake of the Evangelists and the primitive Church are described by Holtzmann thus: "If Jesus was not born in Bethlehem, there is of course an end to all the beautiful stories with which the birth of the Savior of the World has been adorned by the Christian imagination—such as the angel's announcement to the shepherds, the hymn of the heavenly hosts, the greeting by Simeon and Anna, those two Israelites who were waiting for the redemption (*Luke* 2:8–39), the adoration of the Magi, who saw the star of the new-born king and followed it, the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt." [110]

Thank God, we have nothing of the sort to fear! But what can be the motives for trying to establish so strange an opinion?

The Rationalists bring forward numerous Gospel passages wherein Our Lord is explicitly called "Jesus of Nazareth," [111] and "Jesus of Galilee," [112] others where it is said that the town

[107] *Vie de Jésus,* 1871, p. 8.

[108] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 325, 388–394; Pfleiderer, *Entstehung des Christentums,* p. 197; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 40.

[109] *Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne du Christianisme,* p. 161. Some critics are more modest and are satisfied with saying: "seemingly" or "probably." Cfr. Heitmüller, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* III, 365. Harnack rather curiously says *Non liquet,* in his *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte,* 1911, p. 105.

[110] O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* p. 68.

[111] The following is a list of most of them: Matt. 21:11; Mark 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Luke 4:34; 18:37; 24:19; John 1:46; 18:5, 7; 19:19. The same expression appears in the Acts of the Apostles, 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9.

[112] Matt. 26:69; Luke 23:6.

of Nazareth was "His own country," [113] still others in which His disciples are given the scornful and unfriendly appellation of "Galileans," [114] and several texts of the Talmud that add to the Savior's name the epithet *ha-Notseri,* Jesus "of Nazareth." [115] Certain it is that the name of this little town is inseparably and gloriously connected with that of the Lord Jesus; but honest exegesis tells us that not one of the texts just cited proves that He was born at Nazareth. It was there that the mystery of the Incarnation took place; there He "was brought up," to use St. Luke's exact expression; [116] there it was that the long, peaceful years of His hidden life were passed: this is why the Evangelists at times call it "his country" in a broad sense, just as they say of Capharnaum that it was "his city," because He made it His habitual headquarters during His public life.[117] But nowhere do they insinuate that He was born at Nazareth, and it is only by doing violence to the texts that this view can be attributed to them.[118]

The critics strive in vain to find a favorable argument for their thesis in the little dialogue reported by St. John: "Of that multitude [gathered in the outer court of the Temple] . . . some said: This is the prophet indeed. Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: Doth the Christ come out of Galilee?" [119] It was, therefore, generally believed by the rank and file of the Jewish people that Jesus was a native of Galilee, in particular of Nazareth.[120] But this popular belief was mis-

[113] Matt. 13:54; Mark 6:1.

[114] Mark 14:70; John 7:52; cfr. Acts 24:5.

[115] Sanhedr., 43 a, 107 b; Sota, 47 a.

[116] Luke 4:16.

[117] Matt. 9:1; cfr. Mark 2:1.

[118] Maurenbrecher's exegesis is certainly strange (*Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 5). In connection with the text: "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country" (Mark 6:4), he says: "If these words [of the Savior] are authentic—and there can be no doubt about it—Jesus Himself designates Nazareth as his country." Assuredly; not, however, as His birthplace.

[119] John 7:40 f.

[120] Cfr. John 1:46.

taken, as was that which considered Joseph to be His father. We have no need to take any account of it, since it is so clearly contradicted by the historiographers of the holy Infancy.

On St. Matthew's and St. Luke's supposed error, the critics graft a contradiction that is equally unfounded. According to the Third Gospel, "it is Nazareth of Galilee that is indicated as the habitual residence of Joseph and Mary; but this does not agree with the statement of the First Gospel, that Joseph and Mary arrived at Nazareth several years after the birth of Christ," [121] since they were formerly permanent residents of Bethlehem. But, we ask, where does St. Matthew say that the Savior's parents resided permanently at Bethlehem before His birth? Being in general but little concerned with geographical details, he does not mention by name the locality where the events preceding Christ's birth took place; [122] but nothing in his account authorizes us to suppose that Nazareth "was up to that time unknown to Joseph and Mary." [123] He abridged and St. Luke supplemented; any other conclusion would be arbitrary.

But was not Christ's birth at Bethlehem the result of "dogmatic reflection," [124] as several Rationalists [125] seem to think? The prophet Micheas had said, or rather "seemed to say," that the Redeemer of Israel would be born in that little city, and legend saw to it that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy.—As we have already observed, the citation of an Old Testament prophecy by the Evangelists concerning some detail or feature of the life of Christ is, in the eyes of the critics, a reason for doubting the historic character of that detail. But we have like-

[121] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 370. See also Scholten, *Das paulinische Evangelium,* p. 294; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments,* I, 46, etc.

[122] Matt. 1 : 18–24. He mentions them in a very summary fashion.

[123] O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* p. 69, has not hesitated to acknowledge this.

[124] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 392. "An invention of the Messianic dogma," says Heitmüller, *Jesus,* 1913.

[125] Among others, Volkmar, *Jesus Nazarenus,* p. 41; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 52; C. Clemen, *Geschichtlichkeit Jesu,* p. 59.

wise shown that this unjust suspicion is merely the consequence of an unyielding denial of the supernatural, and therefore has no value. St. Matthew had a perfect right closely to correlate Christ's birth with the prophecy of Micheas, since it was the universal belief of the Jews that the Messias was to be born at Bethlehem, and that belief was perfectly justified by the prediction.[126]

Is it not strange that anyone should be called upon to refute such objections and, in this twentieth century, to prove that, although Nazareth had the signal honor of harboring Jesus during the long years of His hidden life, Bethlehem was granted the favor of witnessing His birth in a poor stable? Our opponents ask for proofs, as if the affirmation of two conscientious and well-informed historians were not amply sufficient. Let us recall a remarkable fact, which the critics know as well as we do. When Emperor Hadrian profaned the traditional sites of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ at Jerusalem, he also defiled the spot of the Savior's nativity at Bethlehem. This took place before the year 132 of our era. Hence it follows that even at that early date Bethlehem had long been a place of pilgrimage, whither Christians went to venerate the stable in which Mary had brought her Divine Child into the world, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.[127]

XV. The Census of Quirinius

As we already hinted, the information at the beginning of the Third Gospel as to the world-wide census ordered by Augustus and its execution in Palestine, has long been the object

[126] Matt. 2:4–6; John 7:41 f. See T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus,* 2d ed., p. 94, note 26; Delitzsch, *Messianische Weissagungen,* 2d ed., p. 129.

[127] Cf. Knowling, *Our Lord's Virgin Birth and the Criticism of To-day,* 3d ed., 1907, p. 13.

of violent attacks on the part of Rationalists. The adepts of the so-called critical school charge St. Luke with having invented this detail so as to have Christ born at Bethlehem and to give world-wide importance to His nativity,[128] or at least with having committed a serious anachronism by connecting with this event the census of Quirinius, which really took place ten years later. In this matter the critics are absolutely intransigent. Unwilling to listen to the explanations of the Evangelist's defenders, they regard their thesis as solidly proven and confine themselves to repeating in the same order, and often in the same words, objections that have been a hundred times refuted.[129]

A priori, it is incredible that a historian who has placed at the head of his book a declaration that he engaged in extensive inquiry on the subject of the facts he is going to expound,[130] would have committed, two pages further on, purposely or through unpardonable carelessness, so gross an error and one so easy to avoid. Yet such is the strange conduct imputed to St. Luke, although it is well established that, both in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, he shows a remarkable acquaintance with Græco-Roman matters. But he has not been left without defenders. A whole galaxy of excellent authors,

[128] Such is the opinion of the most advanced critics.

[129] It would be wearisome and useless to quote further from their writings. We therefore merely refer our readers to the chief ones. Cfr. C. Hase, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., pp. 223–228; Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 398–405; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 316; O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* p. 66; Pfleiderer, *Die Entstehung des Christentums,* p. 196; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 391–394; A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* 343; Usener, in Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica,* III, 3345; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 393. Among the popularizers, see Guignebert, *Manuel d'Histoire Ancienne du Christianisme,* p. 162; Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 31. The last-named writer says: "No doubt remains but that the ideas of the author [St. Luke] about such a census are entirely venturesome and fantastic." We are sorry to find in the ranks of the bitterest foes of the sacred writer a scholar of such worth as Schürer (*Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* 3d ed., I, 508–544), who usually treats questions of this kind with greater calmness.

[130] Luke 1 : 1–4.

Catholic and Protestant, has replied to the Rationalist attacks and elucidated the much discussed question of the census of Quirinius.[131]

We will set down the objections as posed by Dr. Schürer.

1. Outside the Third Gospel, history knows nothing of a general census of the Empire in the time of Augustus.—That fact we shall presently challenge. But would that silence be reason enough to reject as unhistorical the information which St. Luke supplies? Should we not be thankful to him for this precious bit of information? As has been said, "If we found in Zonaras or Malalas or some other Byzantine compiler a piece of information similar to that which the Third Gospel conveys, we would regard it as a rich historical find supplementing ancient and often incomplete sources. Why, then, should St. Luke be treated with less consideration?" [132]

But we have positive reasons to explain the silence of ancient historians on the subject of this census. Tacitus' *Annales* open with the reign of Tiberius. For what concerns A. U. C. 745–752, Dio Cassius' history has come to us in the form of an incomplete summary, which is silent on the years 748–752. The silence of Suetonius on the fact in question is

[131] We mention especially the following works: Aberle, *Ueber den Statthalter Quirinius,* in the *Theolog. Quartalschrift* of Tübingen, 1865, pp. 103–148; 1868, pp. 29–64; 1874, pp. 446–687; Desjardins, *Le Recensement de Quirinius,* in the *Revue des Questions Historiques,* 1867, pp. 1–51; Wieseler, *Chronologische Synopse der Evangelien,* 1843, pp. 73–122, and *Beiträge zur richtigen Würdigung der Evangelien,* 1869, pp. 16–107; Zumpt, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi,* 1869, pp. 20–224; H. Wallon, *L'Autorité de l'Évangile,* 3d ed., pp. 330–374; F. Vigouroux, *Le Nouveau Testament et les Découvertes Modernes,* 2d ed., pp. 89–130; Patrizi, *Della Descrizione Universale Mentovata da San Luca, e dell' Anno in che venne eseuita nella Giudea,* 1876; Belser, *Theologische Quartalschrift* of Tübingen, 1896, pp. 1–24; Marucchi, *L'Iscrizione di Quirinio nel Museo Lateranense ed il Censo di San Luca,* 1897; Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 5th ed., 1898; A. Mayer, *Die Schatzung bei Christi Geburt in ihrer Beziehung zu Quirinius,* in the *Revue Biblique,* 1911, pp. 60–85. See also the commentaries by Keil (pp. 213–228). Knabenbauer (pp. 107–118), and Th. Zahn (I, 123–135) on the Gospel according to Saint Luke.

[132] Aberle, *Theolog. Quartalschrift,* 1874, p. 102.

no more surprising than is that of Livy and Polybius on similar episodes of the succeeding reigns.[133] These great historians say nothing of the census of A. D. 6 (A. U. C. 759), which produced an exceptional uproar in Judea and was known both to St. Luke [134] and to Josephus.[135] We shall have something to say later as to why the latter remains silent about the census which forms the subject of our present discussion. It is, moreover, certain that he has but imperfect information on the relations that existed between Palestine and the imperial legates of the province of Syria.

But the facts mentioned above [136] compensate, up to a certain point, for the silence of the ancient writers and decide in favor of St. Luke. We saw that, according to the most authentic sources, the undertaking of which the Evangelist speaks was quite in agreement with the tastes and desires of Augustus. But we possess data still more explicit. Independently of three censuses of the Roman people, properly so called, that ruler had more than one census taken in the provinces, especially in Gaul.[137]

According to papyri recently discovered periodical censuses took place in Egypt every fourteen years.[138] It is probable that a like measure was applied to the province of Syria.[139] We may add, with Zahn,[140] that it is in the nature of things that a general undertaking of this sort, carried on throughout the Empire, that is, over an immense territory ruled by diverse laws, customs, and governments, required a considerable time, which might stretch out over whole years. Hence comes,

[133] See what we said above about the *argumentum e silentio*.

[134] Acts 5:37.

[135] *Ant.*, XVII, xii, 5; XVIII, i, 1; ii, 1; XX, v, 2.

[136] Pages 291 sqq.

[137] Livy, CXXXIV; Dio Cassius, XIII, xxii, 5.

[138] Ramsay gives the irrefutable proof in his work, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* pp. 131–148.

[139] *Ibid.*, pp. 149–173. The proof is less conclusive than for Egypt.

[140] *Das Evangelium des Lukas*, p. 121.

in part at least, the rather vague phrase which St. Luke uses at the beginning of his account, ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις,[141] "in those days," which supposes a prolonged period. The expression in verse 2, in connection with the imperial decree, ἀπογράφεσθαι πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην (Vulg., *"ut describeretur universus orbis"*), does not, therefore, necessarily indicate a decree which ordered a census taken at the same time in all the countries of the Empire. Without forcing the text, we can understand it to mean the express intention of Augustus that a regular, systematic census should be taken in Italy and the provinces. Thus understood, the Evangelist's expression means that the Emperor established the principle of these periodic censuses and that the one which took place in Palestine at the time of the Savior's birth was carried out by virtue of that policy.[142]

2. In the second place it is asserted that, even if the imperial authority had ordered a census in Palestine, neither Joseph nor Mary would have been obliged to go to Bethlehem to be enrolled, because, according to the Roman method, citizens were registered at the place of their actual residence, and, besides, women were not obliged to present themselves in person.—Both remarks are correct; but they are valueless here, because, according to the Evangelist's express statement, the census was carried out in accordance with the *Jewish* method. Elsewhere we said that Mary was not bound to accompany Joseph on this occasion and that, although she made the journey, it was not at all for the special purpose of being enrolled.

Several critics complicate matters by asserting that if everything took place as the Evangelist says, it would have meant a frightful disturbance throughout the Roman Empire, com-

[141] The expression ἐν ἡμέραις ταύταις, "in those days," indicates a shorter interval.

[142] Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 123. Such also seems to be the interpretation of Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, I, xxi, 147: "when they [the Romans] ordered for the first time that a census should be taken."

parable to the migration of whole races.[143] This malicious pleasantry does little credit to those who indulge in it. The statement that "all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city," [144] obviously refers to Palestine only, and it must be borne in mind that Galilee, Peraea, and especially Samaria, contained many foreigners, who would not have to make any such journey at all. The Babylonian captives who had returned to the land of their forefathers had preferably settled in the southern districts of the Holy Land. Many other Israelites no longer had any bond with the places formerly inhabited by their family and were thus registered in the place of their actual residence. We see, then, what the supposed "migration of races" amounts to. In short, it seems correct to say a considerable part of the population of Palestine were not inconvenienced by the census.

3. Even supposing such a decree was published, it would not have been applicable to Palestine, which at that time formed an independent kingdom.—We have already refuted this objection by describing King Herod's true relation to the Emperor. Suetonius explicitly states [145] that Augustus had no hesitation in treating even his allies as "members and parts of the Empire." On the other hand, Josephus reveals Herod's extremely delicate position. "No one except a theological critic with a theory to maintain," says Ramsay, "would dream of denying that Herod's kingdom was a part of the Roman world . . . Any tendency on the part of such dependent kings to disregard their duty of submission to the general

[143] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 344: "The manner in which the census-taking is understood reaches the height of the improbable, because if all the inhabitants of the Empire had been obliged to journey to the place where their ancestors had lived a thousand years before the Christian era, such a movement would have constituted an unparalleled migration of races." Cfr. Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 31.

[144] Luke 2:3.

[145] *August.,* 48.

principles of Roman policy was sharply repressed by the emperors." [146]

4. The critics claim that no census was taken up in Judea before that which Josephus assigns to the year 6–7 of our era. —With Dr. Zahn [147] we wonder at the favorable treatment which the Liberal theologians accord to Josephus and the perfectly unjust contempt which they show for St. Luke. With "blind faith" and a deplorable "lack of criticism" they welcome any items of information supplied by the Jewish historian, although it is proved that many such items are far from being certain and that at times they are even self-contradictory. However, Josephus was not born until about the end of A. D. 36 or the beginning of 37, whereas before the beginning of Emperor Claudius' reign (January, 41) St. Luke was already a member of the Christian community at Antioch in Syria, able to start his historical inquiries into the events that were so close to him.

It is quite true that the Jewish writer makes no allusion to the census which the Evangelist connects with the birth of Christ. On the other hand, he insists on the census that took place ten years later. He describes it as a thing unheard-of until then. But he had particular reasons for neglecting to mention the first enrollment as also for dwelling on the second. It behooves us to bear in mind this essential difference: the former had not been followed by any fiscal measure; officials chosen by Herod had charge of it, and everything took place according to Jewish practices, as St. Luke declares. The latter census, which did not take place until after Archelaus was removed from office, at the time of Judea's official incorporation into the Empire, was conducted by Roman offi-

[146] *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* p. 105. See Vigouroux, *Le Nouveau Testament et les Découvertes Modernes,* 2d ed., pp. 102–105.

[147] *Das Evangelium des Lukas,* p. 129. Lagrange also says (*loc. cit.,* p. 77) that we should not "deny Luke the justice which is due to him. He deserves at least the same consideration as Josephus."

cials in accordance with the Roman method: connected with it was a measure which stirred up the wrath of the Jews and occasioned a revolutionary disturbance on their part.[148] If Josephus did not know of the first census, or if he did not judge it important enough to be noticed in his writings, St. Luke has this advantage over the Jewish historian, that he knew and mentioned both.

Let us return for a moment to the Gospel text.[149] According to the reading which the best exegetes regard as the most probable, its primitive form was: *αὕτη ἀπογραφὴ πρώτη ἐγένετο ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου.*[150] The meaning is: This first census took place (or: This census took place as being first) while Quirinius was governing Syria. The word *πρώτη* ("first") here proves that St. Luke was perfectly in touch with the facts, and that he knew of two distinct censuses, undertaken while Quirinius filled a high administrative office in Syria. In fact, in the Acts of the Apostles (5: 37) St. Luke mentions a second census, corresponding to the one spoken of by Josephus, which stirred up a sedition in Judea. As usual with him, the Evangelist expresses himself very clearly. How can anyone suppose that he was led into error, that he confused the facts, that he antedated the census described by Josephus, so as to be able to connect it with our Lord's nativity?

5. There remains one last objection, namely, that Quirinius certainly did *not* administer the province of Syria in the capacity of imperial legate during the lifetime of Herod the Great, whence it follows that no census could have taken place in Palestine under his direction at the period of Christ's birth, since the Evangelist places this event "in the days of Herod."

[148] Josephus, *Ant.*, XVII, xiii, 5; XVIII, i, 1.

[149] Luke 2: 2.

[150] Some manuscripts insert the article: *αὕτη ἡ ἀπογραφή* . . . Others place the adjective *πρώτη* after the verb *ἐγένετο*. These are simply shades of distinction.

As this difficulty is the most serious of all, it is not surprising that the shrewdness of Christian interpreters has been particularly engaged in its solution. We can here mention only the principal conjectures that have been resorted to in order to prove the Evangelist's truthfulness. Of course they are only conjectures, since (as the critics never tire of repeating) St. Luke is the only one to preserve this detail of Jewish history for us; but they suffice,—at need, one of them alone would suffice,—to guarantee the reality of the event so unjustly contested.

a) A fairly large number of scholars [151] give the adjective πρώτη, whose importance we just mentioned, the meaning of πρότερα; which permits them to translate the passage: "This census took place *before* Quirinius was governor of Syria." They think their opinion can be justified by the aid of many examples taken from ancient Greek authors.[152] In itself this interpretation offers nothing abnormal; the rules of grammar, if that alone were involved, would easily permit it. The desired end would thus be attained, since all difficulty would disappear. Yet we hesitate to adopt this somewhat forced expedient. "It is hard to see why St. Luke should have introduced into this passage a census of the year 6 of our era, if Quirinius counted for nothing in the events he relates." [153]

b) A much more satisfactory reply has won the approval of many exegetes and historians. Learned and ingenious investigations have lent probability to the hypothesis that Quirinius had twice, with an interval between, filled the high office of legate in Syria: first between P. Quinctilius Varus and M. Lollius, about the period of Our Lord's birth; the second time, between A. U. C. 759 and 764. In 1854 Zumpt published a very

[151] Besides those to whose special studies on this question we have referred, there are, among others, Huschke, Wiesler, Wallon, and Lagrange.

[152] See especially the *Revue Biblique, loc. cit.*, pp. 80–84.

[153] Vigouroux, *Les Livres Saints et le Rationalisme Contemporain*, 5th ed., V, 310.

sound dissertation,[154] in which he presented the proof of this thesis, drawn entirely from profane documents. Mommsen later composed an excellent work to the same effect.[155] An inscription, unfortunately only fragmentary, which was discovered at Tivoli (the Tibur of the Romans), served him as the chief basis. It is dedicated to a personage whose name has disappeared, but whose public offices are enumerated at sufficient length; he had twice filled the office of legate in Syria. Mommsen, after cleverly completing the mutilated text,[156] does not think it can fit any other legate but Quirinius.

This discovery of one of the most competent scholars in the realm of Roman history is certainly a very happy one for the solution of the problem we are considering. But, without speaking of the uncertainty that nevertheless prevails as to the name of the legate of the inscription, another difficulty remains. We possess a list of the imperial legates of Syria during the period with which we are here concerned,[157] and we know from a reliable source that Quirinius administered that province for a few years, starting A. D. 6 (A. U. C. 759).[158] It is likewise certain, according to this same list, that his first service cannot go back beyond April A. U. C. 750 (A. D. 4), considering that Varus ceased being legate only after the death of Herod.[159] Now, at that time, as St. Matthew and St. Luke explicitly tell us, the birth of Christ had already occurred. The hypothesis of a double term of office by Quirinius does not, then, entirely meet the proposed objection.

c) It has at least served as a starting-point for other suppositions, which bring us closer to the desired end. Note that

[154] *De Syria Romanorum Provincia, a Caesare Augusto ad Vespasianum.*

[155] *Res Gestae Divi Augusti,* 2d ed., particularly pp. 161–168.

[156] Vigouroux reproduces it in his work, *Le Nouveau Testament et les Découvertes Modernes,* 2d ed., p. 119.

[157] See Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes,* I, 321–327.

[158] No one has yet succeeded in determining how long he held office.

[159] Josephus, *Ant.,* XVII, v, 1; ix, 3; x, 1, 9; xi, 1.

the term employed by the Evangelist to designate Quirinius' office (ἡγεμονεύοντος; Vulg., *praeside*), is not the one which usually corresponds to the title of legate. It is a general and rather vague expression, meaning to have supremacy, to govern. The corresponding substantive ἡγεμών appears several times in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles,[160] as a designation of the *procurator* who administered Judea in the Emperor's name. We may, then, suppose that the Evangelist employed it to indicate an extraordinary mission which the Emperor entrusted to Quirinius in Syria and Palestine, before Herod's death. As he had given proof of his capacity on the field of battle, it has been thought that he may have been assigned a military function, which would have associated him with the official legate, Varus, because of the troubles which were disturbing the neighboring regions.[161] Or else, it might have been with Varus' predecessor, Sentius Saturninus, that he was thus associated, perhaps as *quaestor,* to administer the finances. That would explain why Tertullian[162] assigns the "first census" spoken of by St. Luke, not to Quirinius, but to Sentius Saturninus, and why St. Justin, in three passages of his writings,[163] places the Savior's birth ἐπὶ Κυρηνίου, "under Quirinius." This seems to be the best solution of the problem. "One thing remains certain: it is the considerable part which Quirinius, a personage honored with the Emperor's full confidence, took during this whole period in the affairs of the East,

[160] Matt. 27:2, 11; Luke 3:1; Acts 23:24; 24:1; 26:30.

[161] Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 2d ed., pp. 238–247, cites examples of this doubling of functions. See also Knowling, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ,* I, 205, and Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Lucas,* p. 132.

[162] *Adv. Marcion.,* IV, 19: *"Sed et census constat actos tunc* [the reading *nunc* is certainly a mistaken one] *in Judaea per Saturninum."* The word *constat* shows that Tertullian was sure of his assertion. Hence it was previous to the year 6 B. C., the date at which Varus succeeded Saturninus, that Quirinius must have been sent to Palestine on an extraordinary mission.

[163] *Dial. cum Tryph.,* 78; *Apol.,* I, 34 and 46. He, too, appeals to the official records with regard to this census. See also Origen, *Hom. in Luc.,* XI.

and of Syria in particular. And we do not see what anyone can advance, from the critical viewpoint, in opposition" to the two hypotheses that we have mentioned last.[164] We are aware that this is only an approximation. But "approximation is enough for an Evangelist who said 'in the days of Herod' (1:5), without specifying further, in reference to so long a reign . . . In the face of the silence of history, we must decide the doubt in St. Luke's favor."[165] According to the remark of another scholar,[166] many are the facts of ancient history for which we can not arrive at any more rigorous demonstration. Furthermore, all the presumptions favor the Evangelist, who is the most conscientious of historians and who had no imaginable motive for deceiving his readers on a secondary point.[167]

XVI. The Davidic Descent of Jesus

Let us first mention an extreme opinion which has recruited a small number of followers. As we have seen, the Rationalist exegetes regard it as certain that Christ was born at Nazareth. Taking that as a starting-point, and going back several centuries in the history of the province of Galilee, they observe that, from the time of the terrible Assyrian invasions, the population was rather mixed, and Oriental and Greek elements lived side by side with the Jews. Hence they first conclude that "it is impossible . . . to seek to ascertain what blood flowed

[164] F. Godet, *Comment. sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., p. 156.

[165] Lagrange, *loc. cit.,* p. 80.

[166] Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?* 2d ed., p. 110.

[167] It may, perhaps, be well to point out that St. Luke does not explicitly affirm that Quirinius took a direct part in the first census. The words ἡγεμονεύοντος Κυρηνίου are, in fact, in the genitive absolute, corresponding to the Latin *praeside Quirinio* (St. Ambrose). The Vulgate translation, *a praeside,* is therefore somewhat inexact. We saw above that St. Justin well expresses the real meaning: "under Quirinius," *i. e.,* under his administration, of whatever sort it may have been.

in the veins of Jesus," [168] and then they proceed to assert that the Savior belonged, not to the Jewish, but either to the Aryan or the Indo-Germanic race [169] or to the great Babylonian family.[170]

So extravagant is this assertion that many other critics, even among the most advanced, have felt called upon to protest against it, some timidly, by calling to mind that such a supposition "is devoid of any means of direct verification," [171] others with considerable energy, by declaring that it has no historic basis and takes not the least account of the Gospel narratives, which, after all, are not erroneous from beginning to end.[172]

Without going as far as that, most contemporary Rationalists are of the opinion that Christ certainly did not belong to the family of David. They are willing to recognize that the belief of the Church on this point is very ancient, since it is stated in formal terms by their two favorite authors, St. Mark, whom they regard as the earliest of the Evangelists, and St. Paul the Apostle. They attach a preponderant importance to St. Paul's testimony.[173] But they refuse to let themselves be

[168] E. Renan, *Vie de Jésus,* 1870 p. 10; cf. Frenssen, *Das Leben des Heilands,* 1907, p. 16; H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen,* p. 109; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 417. It is odd to hear von Soden remarking that, "in Jesus' world of ideas, the Greek envelope cannot be misunderstood" (*loc. cit.,* p. 110), while A. Réville regards Jesus as thoroughly Jewish in the full acceptation of the term, for "it is from Judaism that He extracted, so to speak, the principles of His religion." Contradictions of this sort are inevitable when one takes as his chief rule the arbitrary interpretation of texts and facts.

[169] This thesis is maintained by S. Chamberlain, in *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,* I, 211–220 (cf. H. Monnier, *La Mission Historique de Jésus,* 1906, pp. xxvi–xxviii), and by Eric Haupt in the *Open Court,* April, 1909 (cf. the *Expository Times,* September 1909, p. 530, and October 1910, pp. 4–6).

[170] Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel,* 1905, p. 11.

[171] Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 416.

[172] H. Weinel, *Jesus im XIX. Jahrhundert,* 1st ed., p. 186.

[173] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 46; A. Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war,* p. 29: "Paul, that ancient witness beyond suspicion . . . This is not an induction made by Paul, but a tradition that he received, and primitive Christianity did likewise." Others try to rid themselves as best they can of this

convinced. "It was thought," they say, "that Jesus was descended from David because the Christ was to descend from that king" according to the ancient oracles.[174] "For the Jews, 'Son of David' and 'Messias' were synonymous terms, and for the first preachers of the Gospel it was one and the same thing to affirm that Jesus was the Messias and that He was descended from David," [175] for "evidently there existed no certain knowledge of the Davidic origin of Jesus." [176]

The critics, going one step further, and pretending to enter into the mind of Jesus, believe they can read therein that "He did not think Himself to be a son of David otherwise than by way of interpretation, that is, as being the Christ," and even that "He was almost proud of not being descended from David." [177] They assert that He Himself openly protested against the tradition according to which the Messias was to be born of David.[178] The reference is to the episode we have already mentioned and to the objection connected by the Divine Master with Psalm CIX: "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand." "If David, then," Jesus adds, "call him Lord, how is he his son?" [179] According to our opponents, the Savior, in making this remark, intended to say to the Pharisees: You are entirely mistaken in supposing that the

embarrassing witness. Carpenter (*The First Three Gospels,* p. 124) wonders whether St. Paul "had made serious inquiry as to the family of the Master and whether he had taken account of the exactness of the faith of the Church." Without hesitation we can answer this question in the affirmative, because St. Paul's positive spirit was never satisfied with an approximation on such important points, and the inquiry was very easy to make.

[174] A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 330.

[175] *Ibid.,* p. 316.

[176] O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* p. 164. Cf. W. Bousset, *Jesus,* p. 88; H. J. Holtzman, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., pp. 38–40; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 46; Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* pp. 13 f., 30 f.; Heitmüller, in Gunkel and Schiele, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* III, 364, etc.

[177] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 329. Cf. A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 381.

[178] R. von Delius, *loc. cit.,* p. 151.

[179] Matt. 22:41–45; cfr. Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44.

Messias should be born of the royal race of David. And He must have had, at that time, no after-thought in the matter of His own descent; or rather, this saying should be regarded as containing a formal "declaration" to the effect that Jesus "did not consider Himself the Son of David." [180]

How weak all these arguments are! If the compatriots of Jesus and the early Christians called Him "Son of David," they certainly did not do so without a thorough knowledge of His descent, simply because they suspected Him to be the Messias. The Jews were absolutely intransigent on this point, which they rightly considered essential, in accordance with the prophetic oracles. Not for anything in the world would they have agreed to regard as their Messias any claimant, no matter what his merits, who did not meet this requirement, so indispensable and so easy to verify. Hence they would not have awarded to Jesus the glorious title of "Son of David," unless they were certain that He really belonged to the royal family. The Gospel data and those of the other New Testament books form such a striking *ensemble* on this subject that several contemporary Rationalists have yielded to their evidence. Recently one of them wrote that "no reason exists for doubting them." [181] Dr. Keim, who is usually to be found on the side of the most bitter foes of the Gospel tradition, this time ranges himself with the conservative exegetes and declares that there is nothing to disprove the fact that the Savior was a great-grandson of David.[182]

It is claimed that Jesus denied His Davidic origin or attached no importance to it. But that is an impossibility, since

[180] A. Réville, *loc. cit.*, II, 302; see also Loisy, *op. cit.*, I, 197 and 316; Wernle, *Die Anfänge des Christentums*, 2d ed., p. 298; O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu*, p. 64; H. J. Holtzmann, *Neutestam. Theologie*, 2d ed., I, 310; Hausrath, *Jesus*, II, 47; Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci*, p. 97; S. Reinach, *Orpheus*, 1909, p. 329, etc.

[181] A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p. 393.

[182] *Geschichte Jesu*, I, 326–328. See also Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu*, I, 202–204.

He presented Himself to His people as the Messias. To reject the title of Son of David, which was the most popular and one of the oldest titles given to the future Redeemer, would have been contrary to His purpose. His acceptance of that appellation during the whole period of His ministry and especially at the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, would be incomprehensible, considering His perfect integrity, if He were not a member of the royal family. Why did He do nothing to undeceive the multitudes, especially when He saw how this title, accepted by Him, aroused their hopes to the highest pitch? And what shall we say of the singular use which the critics make of the question Our Lord addressed to the Pharisees on the opening words of Psalm CIX? As one of their own number remarks, it is a forced interpretation, which "is no honor to the perspicacity of their exegesis." [183] "In the mind of Jesus," writes another Liberal theologian, "the superior nature [which David attributes to the Messias by calling Him his Lord] can consist only in the [special] relation of Christ with God, in His divine sonship." [184] And Dalmann adds: [185] "To anyone reading these words of Jesus with an unbiased mind, they can mean nothing else but that the Messias is in reality the son of someone who is greater than David, that is God." [186]

If Jesus was not the Son of David, how is it that His enemies, constantly on the watch to bring about His ruin, did not attempt to destroy His authority, either during His public life or during His trial before the Sanhedrin, by declaring and proving that He did not belong to the royal family? Yet they had a chance to do so more than once.[187] And later on, when

[183] A. Schweitzer (the *enfant terrible,* as he has been nicknamed), *loc. cit.,* p. 305.

[184] H. Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 424.

[185] *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 234.

[186] Spitta has treated this fact with remarkable clearness in *Streitfragen zur Geschichte Jesu,* 1907, pp. 157–172.

[187] See especially Matt. 12:23–37.

the Apostles in their preaching took as their starting-point the Davidic origin of their Master, no one contradicted them.[188] Furthermore, the Talmud acknowledges that Jesus "was closely related to royalty"; [189] meaning that He belonged to the race of David.

Two Liberal Protestant theologians will supply our conclusion. "Critical and exegetical science has established with certainty the acceptance of the fact of the Davidic descent of Jesus by Himself, by His contemporaries, and by His immediate followers," [190] and also by His enemies, as we saw above. "We have no right to doubt that Jesus is really the Son of David." [191]

XVII. The Genealogical Lists

These lists, by which St. Matthew and St. Luke clearly intended to prove the royal descent of Christ, have not found favor with the Rationalists, who repeat the objections of Celsus,[192] Faustus the Manichean,[193] and Julian the Apostate.[194] According to these writers, the lists are contradictory, useless, imaginary, in total disagreement with the theory of the virgin birth of Christ; and moreover, it was impossible to draw up such a list with exactness.

a) There is nothing surprising in the first charge, since even Christian exegetes had to ask themselves the question whether there is not a real contradiction between the two

[188] Cfr. Acts 2: 30–36.

[189] Tractate Sanhedrin, 43, a. Cfr. Derenbourg, *Histoire et Géographie de la Palestine,* p. 349; F. Delitzsch, *Jesus und Hillel,* 2d ed., p. 13. Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 79, without sufficient grounds, affirms that in this Talmudic text the word *malhut* ("royalty") designates the Roman government. In what sense, then, was Jesus "related"?

[190] H. Bacon, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible,* II, 138.

[191] H. Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 425.

[192] See Origen, *Contra Cels.,* II, 32.

[193] St. Augustine, *Contra Faust.,* XXIII, 3.

[194] *Juliani Libri contra Christum,* ed. Neumann, pp. 212 and 234.

genealogies. But, on closer study, these interpreters observe, as we have seen, that the differences are not essential and can be explained in various ways. It is, then, not true to say that "they can be brought into agreement only by desperate means," [195] by "valueless expedients," [196] since they are absolutely irreconcilable and mutually destructive of each other.[197]

b) Are these lists futile, and do they fail to fulfil the purpose for which St. Matthew and St. Luke introduced them into their narratives? The critics say that they have no meaning except on the hypothesis that Joseph is truly the father of Jesus: in the contrary case, they are "meaningless," [198] since Mary's Son would be descended from David only in a fictitious way. "The whole proof then becomes decrepit." [199] We have anticipated this objection and refuted it by showing that the two lists, even if neither of them traces the Blessed Virgin's genealogy, fully establish the right of Jesus to the throne of David, since He was the legal heir of His foster-father. Moreover, through His mother He truly belonged to the royal family.

c) The critics have brought an even graver accusation against the two genealogical tables. They assert that these tables were deliberately invented by the Evangelists or by the early Christians. "They are largely the result of combinations and guesses which have nothing to do with history." [200] "It was necessary to prove Jesus to be the Son of David; so they set to work drawing up His genealogy . . . without authentic

[195] K. Hase, *Leben Jesu*, 5th ed., p. 61.

[196] J. Weiss, *Christus*, p. 80.

[197] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 327; Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels*, p. 104; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 362; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 46, etc.

[198] Warschauer, *Jesus, Seven Questions*, p. 75.

[199] R. Otto, *Leben und Wirken Jesu*, p. 22; cfr. O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu*, p. 62; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 388.

[200] Loisy, *op. cit.*, I, 327.

documents";[201] for, at the time they were composed, the tradition must have been "incomplete and confused."[202]—But these are utterly gratuitous assertions, against which both ordinary common sense and the well-known honesty of the sacred writers protest. Being real historians, could they for a single moment have entertained the idea of inserting into their narratives documents whose spuriousness could be so easily proved? St. Matthew would have hopelessly injured his case if he had presented to his fellow-Jews an imaginary list of Christ's ancestors. St. Luke is a model historian, who wrote only after careful research and knew what he was saying. To suppose that they wished to deceive or were themselves deceived on so vital a point is nothing more than a"hypercritical attack."[203] In fact the two genealogies are largely subject to verification through the aid of similar tables, preserved in several places of the Old Testament.[204]

d) We are assured that it would have been impossible, at the time the Gospels were written, to reconstruct the real genealogy of Joseph or that of any other descendant of David. "The obscurity into which the royal family had fallen did not permit of a reliable enumeration of the persons descended from it."[205] This assertion the Rationalist critics attempt to bolster with the most curious reasoning: "During the whole interval following the [Babylonian] Captivity, beginning with the death of Zorobabel, not a single trace can be found of any survivor of the ancient royal family of Juda. However, occasions were not lacking when the unquestionable existence of a descendant of David would have given risen either to seditious activities or to precautionary measures by the rulers of the time. The same remark is applicable to the Herodian

[201] A. Réville, *op. cit.*, I, 388.
[202] Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, 4th ed., II, 48; cfr. Hausrath, *Jesus*, II, 47, etc.
[203] B. Weiss, *Leben Jesu*, I, 208.
[204] Cfr. Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Par. 2:4–15; 3:10–16.
[205] Loisy, *op. cit.*, I, 316.

period."[206] Does this mean that no descendants of David existed because there was no revolt?

But we have a more serious reply. One must have a very slight acquaintance with Israelitic history or must affect to forget it to employ such language. At all times there was an abundance of genealogical documents among the ancient Hebrews and among the Jews contemporaneous with Our Lord, as we learn from the Books of Paralipomenon, Esdras, Nehemias, the Gospels, the historian Josephus, and the Talmud. The theocratic nation was ever intent upon preserving its ancient family traditions and memories. And especially was it concerned in maintaining the integrity of the genealogical tables, which were regarded as essential for the purity of the race. Nehemias [207] tells us that in his time several families were forbidden to reside in Jerusalem because they were unable to furnish proof of their Jewish origin. Priests who found themselves in the same situation were not authorized to exercise their ministry.[208] St. Luke mentions as a well-known fact that the prophetess Anna belonged to the tribe of Aser.[209] St. Paul knew that he himself belonged to the tribe of Benjamin,[210] and probably could have established this claim with documentary proofs. Josephus declares [211] that he saw with his own eyes his personal genealogy in the public registers and mentions [212] the extreme care exercised in preserving the genealogical lists of the Jewish priests, wherever they lived—in Egypt, Babylonia, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. With all the more reason must they have done likewise for the members of the royal family, knowing, as they did, that the Messias would some day issue from it.

[206] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 378.
[207] Neh. 7:61 f.
[208] *Ibid.*, 63–65.
[209] Luke 2:36.
[210] Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5.
[211] *Vita*, I.
[212] *Contra Apion.*, I, 7.

Moreover, it is not conceivable that the descendants of David should have been indifferent to their own genealogy.[213] It was by means of the public registers that the famous Rabbi Hillel proved his Davidic origin.[214] Later on, the *Desposyni,*[215] of which there was some question above, were able to prove that they were really descended from David, and their proofs were so convincing that not only the Christians, but even the Jews recognized their rights.[216] A specialist very well acquainted with Jewish affairs in Our Lord's time, writes: "When, independently of glorious memories, national hopes in a matter of vital interest are connected with one certain family, this latter is no more apt to forget its origin than, for example, the humble descendants of Mohammed in our day, or the peasant families in Norway who are sprung from the old royal stock. Hence it follows that there is no serious reason to doubt the existence of an authentic tradition relative to the Davidic origin of the family of Joseph." [217] True, Julius Africanus [218] cites the testimony of the *Desposyni,* according to which King Herod, in the hope of having his Idumean origin forgotten, ordered the destruction of the genealogical tables that formed part of the archives of Jerusalem. But these relatives of Christ added that the records were reconstructed. This was a relatively easy matter, either by following the oral tradition or consulting private documents which had escaped the despot's insensate rage.

[213] Many of them came back to Palestine with Zorobabel at the close of the Captivity.

[214] Jerusalem Talmud, Taanith, 68, a; see Derenbourg, *Histoire et Géographie de la Palestine,* pp. 349 and 352.

[215] This is a Latin noun, based on the Greek Δεσπόσυνοι which is derived from Δεσπότης, master, lord (Jesus, the master and lord *par excellence*). At an early date it was used to designate the members of the Savior's family.

[216] St. Hegesippus, in Eusebius, *H. E.,* III, 12; XIX, 20, 1–2.

[217] Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 266.

[218] In Eusebius, *H. E.,* I, vii, 11–15; see Spitta, *Der Brief des Africanus an Aristides,* p. 121.

From all these details it follows that the transmission of an authentic genealogy of Christ was possible, because it is beyond dispute that, even after the Exile, the Jews were greatly concerned to preserve their genealogical lists.[219]

e) Once again the Rationalists bring us back to the Savior's virgin birth in order to formulate a final objection to the historicity of the Gospel genealogies. Only for a moment we will follow them on this path, which our previous explanations have shown to have no basis. They propose this dilemma: If Christ is the Son of David, He can be so only through Joseph, and in that case He was not born of a virgin; if Mary is His mother, He is not truly descended from David. The genealogies were therefore "worked out in circles where there was no suspicion of a virginal conception. The narratives of the virginal conception render the genealogies superfluous." [220] In the face of this objection, what is said by the Evangelists to whom we owe the two lists of Christ's ancestors? St. Matthew closes his list with the words: "Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus." [221] St. Luke, at the beginning of his enumeration, puts the parenthesis: "As it was supposed." [222] Both of them say the very contrary of what the critics try to make out. They connect the Lord Jesus by genuine and close bonds with the family of David: on St. Joseph's side, by an adoption which conferred legal rights upon Him, and on His mother's side, by real bonds of flesh and blood. In what respect, we ask, does this contradict the accounts of the miraculous conception?

[219] E. Klostermann, *Matthäus,* p. 153; see Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 326.

[220] A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 197, 317: "The Evangelists inserted the genealogies without seeing that they were a denial of the virgin birth." Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 46. Cfr. Lobstein, *Études Christologiques;* Pfleiderer, *Urchristentum,* 2d ed., p. 221; Bousset, *Jesus,* p. 2, etc.

[221] Matt. 1:16.

[222] Luke 3:23.

XVIII. The Purification of Mary and Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

Against these touching mysteries contemporary Rationalists adduce only the most banal objections. They are late legends, we are told, since Christ was born in Nazareth, and His parents did not dream of taking Him to Jerusalem.[223] Various motives, based on the Old Testament, contributed to the formation of these fictitious narratives: among others, the law of the redemption of the firstborn [224] and the consecration of the young Samuel to the Lord by his mother.[225] Anna and Simeon are "symbolic figures." [226] "Ancient times had a childish tendency to set forth their convictions in the form of history." [227] Those here related by St. Luke have for their "real aim" to "show how Jesus, declared Messias at the time of His birth, was again hailed as such in the Temple by the two venerable inspired people." [228] Moreover, these stories also prove that "the early tradition regarded Christ's nativity as an ordinary birth, since His mother needed a purification." [229]

All these assertions are without foundation. Jesus was born at Bethlehem, not at Nazareth. We have pointed out the higher reasons for which He and His Mother humbly submitted to laws which affected them only in appearance. Anna and Simeon are living, real figures, whom it was not necessary to invent. What advantage was it for the Evangelist to

[223] Mehlhorn, *Wahrheit und Dichtung in den Evangelien*, p. 33.
[224] Num. 18: 15.
[225] 1 Kings 1: 24.
[226] Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war*, p. 64.
[227] Niebergall, *Jesus im Unterricht*, 1910, p. 13; cfr. Keim, *Jesus von Nazara*, I, 372–374.
[228] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 355.
[229] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 396; cfr. A. Merx, *Die vier kanonischen Evangelien nach ihrem ältesten bekannten Texte*, II, 189.

furnish such concrete details about them, such as the age of the prophetess Anna or the name of her father and that of her tribe, if these personages were purely imaginary? We also pointed out the reason for which God was pleased to glorify His Son in the first days of His mortal life. We may say, in fine, that if Simeon's prophecy had been invented by "the faith of the primitive Church," it would have borne an entirely different aspect. Its inventors would have taken care not to present the Messias as the glory of Israel, since most of the Jews adopted toward Jesus an attitude of obstinate unbelief.

XIX. The Canticles of the Incarnation

Every Christian soul admires the noble and simple beauty [230] of these four canticles and their appropriateness to the circumstances in which they were improvised. But all together and severally they are the object of repeated attacks on the part of the Rationalists. We have now to turn our attention to their defense.

As might readily be supposed, the Rationalist critics will not grant that they are the work of the persons whose names they bear, but assert that they were composed either by St. Luke or some other member of the primitive Church. It is even said that their origin was not Christian at all, but Jewish.

Let us, according to our usual practice, cite the principal appreciations of them by the Liberal school. "The improvised canticles are as frequent in Luke's account as the revelatory dreams in that of Matthew": [231] consequently they have no more historic reality than those dreams. They "belong to the

[230] "The canticles are so pure and sweet, *Magnificat . . . , Gloria in excelsis . . . , Nunc dimittis . . . , Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel . . .* , are destined to serve as the basis for a new liturgy." E. Renan, *Les Évangiles et la Seconde Génération Chrétienne*, p. 278.

[231] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 370.

sphere of religious imagination."[232] They are not truly adapted to the narratives into which they have been introduced; they have no close connection with them: a clear proof that "they must have been added by the Gospel editor."[233]

We object to this last assertion. A close study of the four canticles reveals, on the contrary, that they are perfectly appropriate and fit admirably into the context and harmonize as fully as one could wish with the condition of the persons on whose lips they are placed by the sacred writer. As we mentioned when explaining these canticles, each of them describes, with most fitting nuances, the many blessings of the Messias and opens new views on His future office. This is an argument of great weight in favor of their authenticity. We may add that the two principal canticles—the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*—have a marked Judaic coloring. Now St. Luke was of pagan origin and not very familiar with things Jewish. How, then, could he have so well assimilated, about sixty years after the events he describes, the religious feelings and Messianic hopes of the Jews at the time of Christ's birth, and expressed them so exactly in the Israelitic manner of speech of that period, without intermingling real Christian concepts? Quite truly has it been denied that such a thing was possible.[234]

The reciprocal contradictions of the critics would of themselves be enough to show that they are far from being sure of their facts. Whose are these canticles if their authors are not Mary nor Zachary nor the angels nor Simeon? They are "Jewish psalms," say some;[235] Jewish-Christian, *i. e.*,

[232] E. Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels*, p. 111.

[233] Loisy, *op. cit.*, I, 145; cfr. Spitta, *Zeitschrift für neutestam. Wissenschaft*, VII, 316.

[234] See Th. Zahn, *Einleitung in das N. T.*, II, 404.

[235] Hillmann, in the *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, XVII, 1901, pp. 192–261; Spitta, *loc. cit.*, p. 316, etc.

Ebionite hymns, declare others;[236] still others[237] proclaim them to be purely Christian poems, remnants of the hymnology of the primitive Church. Who is right? Let us examine each of the canticles in order.

1. The *Magnificat.* We must first settle a question of textual criticism, which a few years ago (thirty at most) engaged the attention of a handful of savants, but which a bold assertion of the critics has made a matter of common discussion. According to these critics, the author of the Third Gospel himself attributed the composition of the *Magnificat,* not to Mary, but to Elizabeth. Here are the facts. Immediately preceding the canticle[238] we read the introductory formula: "And Mary said." Now Origen tells us[239] that in his time several Greek manuscripts, instead of the Blessed Virgin's name, mention that of Elizabeth, and three early Latin manuscripts[240] also have the reading *Elisabeth* in place of *Maria.* Furthermore, Nicetas of Remesiana, in the middle of the seventh century, wrote: "Elizabeth, for a long time barren . . . ceases not to glorify [*magnificare*] God with her whole soul";[241] and a little further on: "With Elizabeth, our soul doth glorify [*magnificat*] the Lord."[242]

It is on these documents that the critics base their opinion.[243] However, aside from their small number, they do not

[236] H. J. Holtzmann, J. Weiss, Loisy, etc.

[237] Notably A. Harnack, for the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus,* in his small work, *Lukas der Arzt,* p. 69.

[238] Luke 1:46.

[239] *Hom. in Lucam,* V. 5.

[240] The *Vercellensis,* of the fourth century; the *Veronensis,* of the fifth century, and the *Rhedigeranus-Vratislaviensis,* a little later.

[241] *De Psalmodiae Bono,* IX.

[242] *Ibid.,* XI.

[243] Its principal defenders are A. Hillmann, *loc. cit.,* 197–200; Volter, *Theolog. Tijdschrift,* 1896, pp. 254–256; A. Harnack, *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,* 1900, XXVII, 437–440; Loisy, *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses,* 1897, pp. 424–432, and *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 299, 301–305. Several Catholic writers have replied vigorously,

represent a tradition, but only an unauthorized variant, which the critics would have been careful not to mention, were it not that it seemed to favor their contention.

This contention is refuted by five solid arguments, *viz.:* the testimony of nearly all the Greek manuscripts,[244] that of all the versions, the interpretation clearly required by the context, Mary's state of mind, and the constant tradition of the Church.

Let us confine ourselves to a few short explanations bearing on the last three of these arguments. In the first place, it is certain that, taking the account as a whole, it is Mary, not Elizabeth, who should have uttered the words of the *Magnificat*. One of the heads of the Protestant Liberal school acknowledges this when he says: "What is decisive in favor of Mary is the circumstance that in this place a song of praise on Elizabeth's part would be too late; its right place would be after verse 25.[245] Here, on the contrary, the harmony of the facts requires that the coming birth of the Messias be celebrated." [246] Between Elizabeth's situation and the theme of the *Magnificat,* no satisfactory connection can be established. This theme is too far above it, for it announces the realization of a promise that is much loftier than the birth of the precursor. And what an exaggeration it would be, on Elizabeth's part, to declare that all generations would proclaim her blessed!

On the contrary, everything in the *Magnificat* fits Mary's state of mind. It would be hard to comprehend that she should

among others A. Durand, in the *Revue Biblique,* VII, 74–77; Lepin, *L'Université Catholique,* new series, XXXIX, 213–242; Ladeuze, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique,* 1903, pp. 623–644; O. Bardenhewer, *1st Elisabeth die Sängerin des Magnificat?* 1901; see also Spitta, *Das Magnifikat ein Psalm der Maria und nicht der Elisabeth* (*Theologische Abhandlungen,* 1902).

[244] We say *nearly,* because of Origen's remark, for all the Greek manuscripts actually known have the reading Μαριαμ.

[245] Luke 1:25. That is, at the time when Elizabeth knew that she was going to become a mother.

[246] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 389.

remain silent at such a moment, after her cousin's hearty felicitations. Just as the words of the canticle would seem too calm, too gentle for Elizabeth's eager nature, and but little in accord with the feeling she manifested, in broken phrases, at the Blessed Virgin's arrival,[247] so they are in perfect harmony with Mary's character. In fact, she has more self-control and is able to express her joy and thanksgiving in more measured words, which follow one another in the manner of a gentle pious meditation.

The tradition of the Church on the authorship of the *Magnificat* is clear and ancient. In the East as in the West, in Egypt as in Syria, at Rome as at Constantinople and Jerusalem, it is everywhere uniform. Origen mentions the variant "And Elizabeth said," only in order to show that it is negligible, nay, false. In fact, the reading "And Mary said" is the only one that can be found before the third century.

We mentioned the echoes of the Old Testament occurring here and there in the *Magnificat,* and at the same time said how natural they were on the lips of a devout Israelite. The critics,—who, moreover, exaggerate their number,—regard them quite otherwise and conclude that Mary's canticle is devoid of all originality.[248] They find that the Mother of Christ took too much from the old Hebrew poems, especially from the canticle of Anna, Samuel's mother. They even go so far as to dictate to her the language she should have used. Why does she make no allusion to the words of the angel and to the Incarnation of the Word in her womb? Why does she not even mention the Messias? They conclude that "perhaps the hymn was first composed as a mother's thanksgiving on

[247] Luke 1:42–45.

[248] Hillmann, *loc. cit.,* p. 199: "If it is admitted that Mary was inspired by the Holy Ghost, I am surprised, with Strauss, that a product of the Holy Ghost should not be more original." Cfr. J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 389.

the occasion of the happy victory of her son, who had triumphed over the oppressors of Israel." [249] And that is what they propose as more worthy of belief than the Gospel account!

Without entering into useless details, we reply to our opponents as follows: (1) Between Anna's canticle and that of Mary there exists as marked a difference as between a song of proud, personal victory and a song of humble thanksgiving, so that the *Magnificat* remains an original production notwithstanding a few thoughts taken from the Old Testament. (2) The words: "He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid" [250] recall the lowly title which Mary had taken when answering the angel: *"Ecce ancilla Domini."* [251] (3) In her canticle the Mother of Christ does not speak from a Christian point of view,—the Rationalists have a right to be surprised at this,—but as an Israelite on whom God has just bestowed the greatest honor that could be conceived. (4) Her song most happily recalls the Messianic promises made to the Patriarchs and Prophets, promises which were now about to be fulfilled. The *Magnificat* could not have better suited the circumstances.

2. The *Benedictus,* the critics are sure, does not come from Zachary any more than the *Magnificat* is the work of Mary. When a father, they say, starts to compose a poem, religious or otherwise, on the birth of his son, it is to the latter he devotes his first thoughts and words; he does not, as is the case here, concern himself first with all sorts of foreign matters which have not taken place. The first part of the canticle,[252] which is much the larger part, has no connection with the circumcision of the precursor; it is an exclusively Jewish

[249] Hillmann, *ibid.,* p. 200; see also Spitta, *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,* VII, 316.

[250] Luke 1:48.

[251] Luke 1:38.

[252] Luke 1:68–75.

canticle. The second part [253] is a Christian song, composed by a very different author.[254] The editor of the Third Gospel has grouped the two poems into one,[255] which "was introduced too late and inserted into the narrative; hence it describes facts and states of mind which could exist in this form only among later Christians." [256]

Who is right? The *Benedictus,* as well as the other three canticles whose preservation we owe to St. Luke, could not be Jewish and Christian at one and the same time. It is true to say that it is made up of two distinct parts, the one, more general, addressed to the whole Israelitic people, and the other, more special, which concerns the son of Zachary. But there is the strictest unity between the parts, since, on the one hand, the poet points out what the Messianic redemption will be for his nation, and, on the other hand, he traces the office of his son in relation to the Messias. The *Benedictus* is, therefore, truly the song of a Jew nourished on the Bible and the Prophets, who foretells the future blessings of the Redeemer. There is no ground for seeing anything else in it.

3. The *Gloria in excelsis* is no more "superimposed on the account" of St. Luke than are the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat.* It is there perfectly in its proper place. If the two notes of which it is composed are later heard from human lips at the time of Christ's solemn entry into Jerusalem, [257] that is because they admirably express that double effect of the Redemption: glory to God and peace to the world.

4. Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* is the object of similar and equally undeserved attacks. One critic claims that it is very easy to "detach it from its context";[258] but one of his col-

[253] Luke 1:76–79.
[254] Hillmann, *op. cit.,* pp. 206–213.
[255] Spitta, *loc. cit.,* p. 316.
[256] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 391.
[257] Luke 19:38.
[258] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 357.

leagues replies that these "poetical words harmonize very well with the situation"; [259] and he is right. Again we are told that "it does not go beyond the Messianic ideal previously expressed by the angel Gabriel and in the canticles of Elizabeth [*i. e.*, of Mary] and of Zachary." [260] Dr. Spitta [261] goes much farther, asserting that in the *Nunc dimittis* there is "not even question of the person of the Messias."

Let us consider these last two assertions. They are certainly strange, since Simeon speaks only of the Messias in his touching canticle and since to the theme of the blessings conferred on Israel by the Divine Child, a theme already set forth by Mary and by the father of John the Baptist, the saintly old man adds those which Jesus is going to bestow on the pagans.

To finish with the Rationalists in connection with the canticles of the Infancy, we will cite this reasoning proposed by one of the most moderate of them. Nothing will better show how fragile their hypotheses are. Spitta [262] wonders how these religious poems, which he regards as ancient Jewish psalms, have come to be attributed to the Blessed Virgin, to the father of the precursor, and to the venerable Simeon. *Perhaps,* he replies, St. Luke or the editor of the Third Gospel found them in a collection of Christian songs, with the titles τῆς Μαρίαμ, "of Mary," τοῦ Ζαχαρίου, "of Zachary," τοῦ Συμεῶνος, "of Simeon," the primitive Church having considered them the work of these holy persons. *Perhaps* also the titles at first represented neither the Mother of Jesus, nor the husband of Elizabeth, nor the old man associated with the mystery of the Presentation, the names of Mary, Zachary, and Simeon being at that time very common among the Jews. And St. Luke would have been led into error by this identity of names.

[259] J. Weiss, *loc. cit.*, p. 398.
[260] Loisy, *loc. cit.*
[261] *Ibid.*
[262] *Zeitschrift der neutestam. Wissenschaft,* VII, 316 f.

Is such reasoning serious in view of the painstaking methods of the author of the Third Gospel? No, indeed; our four canticles are not a late addition, intended to embellish the Savior's preliminary history. Tradition noted them early and preserved them faithfully, which was enough, thanks to their simplicity and to the retentive memory of the Orientals.[263] No historic reason can be advanced why we ought to look upon these exquisite poems with any more distrust than upon the other parts of the Gospels. We therefore reject the unproved assertions of those who claim that these songs have no more reality than the speeches which Livy assigns to his heroes.

XX. The Adoration of the Magi; the Flight into Egypt; the Slaughter of the Innocents

These episodes of the Savior's infancy figure among those against which Rationalist criticism is most rabid. It sees in them nothing but a "legend," which it condescends to find "very dramatic and beautiful," "rich in color," so that "it is natural that it should always have attracted painters and poets . . . ; only, there is not a grain of history in them."[264] It attributes them, even more than many other Gospel details,

[263] "The canticles themselves could be faithfully preserved until then. There was no need of an autograph. Mary's heart had kept all, as the writer himself bears witness, and his words are not vain utterances. The deeper impressions are, the more ineradicably are the thoughts which they express engraved in the soul; the memory of the characteristic expressions which formulate them remains indissolubly bound to that of the thoughts themselves. Everyone has experienced this fact in the grave moments of his life." (F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., I, 203).

[264] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 396 f. "It is poetry under the form of history," says Keim (*Geschichte Jesu,* I, 377). Soltau (*Geburtsgeschichte Jesu,* p. 16) is still less restrained in his language: "No intelligent man will consider as historical the details concerning the flight to Egypt and the massacre of the children of Bethlehem." See also C. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des N. T.,* pp. 231–239; Harnack, *Neue Untersuchungen,* p. 105.

to the faith of the primitive Church, which glorified Christ by the homage which the pagan world offered Him in His crib and by the wonderful manner in which He escaped the snares of the cruel Herod.[265] "Motives" or influences of various kinds, derived from Judaism and paganism, are said to have served as the starting-point for this series of legends.

For the sake of orderly treatment we will divide the objections into two groups. We will first answer those which tend to reject the historical character of the Magi's visit, and then examine those which concern Herod's measures of persecution. But before we go ahead, we must cast a glance at the narrative as a whole, asking ourselves if it justifies the suspicions that have been directed against it.

1. Those who attack the Gospel account avow, directly or indirectly, that they question its truthfulness especially on account of the supernatural elements it contains; a wholly unacceptable reason from the point of view of impartial criticism, as we have already demonstrated. They speak of legends. We invite those who make this charge against so simple and restrained and natural a narrative to refer again, for this particular part of the holy Infancy, to the apocryphal gospels and their fantastic lucubrations, for the most part banal and obviously false. They will then see what a vast difference there is between legend and true history. In addition to this there is the outer setting of the narrative, which is in remarkable agreement with the data we have from other sources. "The arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem, the manner of their questioning, revealing the fact that they were not Jews, the Messianic significance of their question and its appreciation by the people and by Herod, the consequent effect on the city and on

[265] "The Magi represent the anticipated homage of the pagan world . . . rendered to the universal Savior who was sprung from Israel. To this homage of non-Jewish mankind was joined the firmament, as being the noblest portion of the world of nature. Everything pays homage to Jesus, who is the center of the entire world." Niebergall, *Jesus im Unterricht*, p. 12.

the King, Herod's questioning of the Scribes as to where the Christ, *i. e.*, the Messias, should be born, the answer, according not only with Old Testament prophecy, but with the Messianic ideas of the time, and, finally, the character of Herod, suspicious, dissimulating, treacherous,—the whole description vividly reflects the historical condition of the closing years of Herod's reign. The local coloring betrays no false touch. The ideas and scenes are appropriate to the times, and the character of Herod is quite his own." [266]

From another viewpoint, already indicated above, the Magi's visit is entirely plausible, because "everything goes to prove that the Messianic ideas had been able to penetrate far into the East." [267] As an eminent Protestant commentator says, "it is difficult to find any satisfactory explanation of its origin [*i. e.*, of this episode], excepting that in the main it is true." [268]

Of course, there is the star and what seems a psychological error in the description of Herod's character. While personally believing in the miraculous nature of the star, we admit that the narrative does not absolutely require a miracle.[269]

[266] W. P. Armstrong, in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels,* I, 721.

[267] Reuss, *Histoire Évangélique,* p. 151. The destinies of the "land of the West" have always aroused a lively interest in Oriental countries, particularly in Chaldea, as may be seen from ancient monuments. "No geographical name appears so often as that of this region." (Jeremias, *Babylonisches im N. T.,* p. 55). In this respect, St. Matthew's account is, therefore, quite in accord with the cuneiform inscriptions. Friedrich Delitzsch (*Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 133) speaks of ancient Babylonian oracles that announced the coming of a great king, who would arise in the West and bring about a reign of justice and right, of peace and joy, over the whole earth, thus making all peoples happy. Cfr. J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 320.

[268] Plummer, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew,* II, 12.

[269] It creates "perplexities" for them (E. Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels,* p. 109), whatever view one accepts. If you speak to them of a planetary conjunction, they reply, rather justly perhaps, that "this conjunction has no resemblance to the Magi's star" (*Ibid.*). Should you speak of a fixed star, they will tell you that "a star which advances and stops above a house . . . is easily conceivable from the ancients' point of view. For us, who know what a star is and at what distance from the earth it moves, such a forward motion to

We merely say, with E. de Pressensé: "Evidently a star does not stand still over a house; it could not limit its rays of light to that point. But it is possible that, after remaining unseen, it might reappear at the very moment when one arrives at a given place. The Gospel account uses the popular manner of speaking and, just as it has the sun rise and set, it does not lay claim to scientific exactness in the description of natural phenomena." [270]

It is also wrong to regard Herod's dealings with the Magi as inexplicable from the psychological point of view. It has been called "imprudent" and in contradiction to all that history tells us of his cunning and crafty character.[271] Some have been unwilling to understand why he entrusted to strangers "investigations which his police," or even "the first inhabitant coming from Bethlehem could have supplied." [272] Even so, Herod did not need the Magi's help to find the Christ Child. But fear, hatred, wrath, in a word, human passions, often make the most prudent abandon the path of true wisdom. Partly on this account did the crafty despot, instead of using ordinary police spies, prefer for a while to conceal his inner feelings. He no doubt feared to have his sinister project frustrated by recourse to other means. His method, therefore, in these circumstances was neither "imprudent" nor "superfluous," as the adversaries of the Gospel assert.

2. Having said this much, let us take up the theories de-

point out the road and such a stop above a house has no sense." (Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, 2d ed., p. 231). It is even said that this star could have "accomplished its whole work at one time, leading the Magi directly to the end of their journey [to Bethlehem]. Thus Herod would not have heard of them, . . . and the little children of the city of David would have remained safe from harm." (Carpenter, *loc. cit.*).

[270] *Jésus Christ, son Temps, sa Vie, son Œuvre*, p. 279.

[271] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu*, I, 376; Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, 2d ed., p. 229, etc.

[272] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, I, 367; A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 367, 397; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 220; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker*, p. 48, etc.

vised by the critics to ascertain what they call the "motives" that led to the narrative of the Magi's visit. Two such motives have been excogitated. The first is taken from Judaism. According to some [273] it is the prophecy of Balaam; [274] according to others,[275] a series of texts from Isais [276] and the Psalms.[277] But Balaam's star is simply a metaphor to designate the Messias, and not a star properly speaking. The other alleged texts prophesy the conversion of the pagan world to the true God and go far beyond the very special incident of the Magi's visit; a literary genius of the first order would be needed to transform them into so brilliant an episode. Further, how does it happen that St. Matthew, who is usually so zealous in pointing out the fulfilment of ancient prophecies in our Lord, makes no allusion to those which, in the Rationalist hypothesis, inspired his account? [278]

Most Liberal theologians have sought the source of the story of the Magi in pagan ideas or facts. Several of them insist on the almost general belief current among the pagans at the beginning of our era, that extraordinary phenomena of the heavenly bodies were associated with the principal events in the lives of kings and heroes, if not of all men.[279] But how could that superstition create the detailed story of the Magi's visit to the crib? A vague notion would be unable to create all the details of this most touching story. Moreover, as we saw

[273] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* p. 47; Loisy, *op. cit.,* I, 364, etc.

[274] Num. 24: 17.

[275] Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 377.

[276] Is. 9: 1 f.; 42: 6; 49: 6 f: three different passages in which it is announced that the Messiah is to be "a light to the Gentiles" and is to draw all peoples unto Himself; especially 60: 3: "O Jerusalem . . . the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising."

[277] Ps. 67: 29–35 (in particular verse 30: "From thy temple in Jerusalem, kings shall offer presents to thee"); 71: 10.

[278] Several critics, among those who do not admit a Jewish influence, but insist upon a pagan "motif," agree with conservative theologians in making this just remark. Among others, J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 220.

[279] Cicero, *De Divin.,* I, 47; Justin, *Hist.,* XXXII, 2, for Mithridates; Lamp-

from other examples, on which the critics vainly attempt to base their destructive systems, if at times there may be found, between such and such ideas or events in the Gospels and certain rites or notions in pagan religions, some analogies that at first blush seem striking, that ought not surprise us. If these similarities are studied more deeply, one soon discovers that the likenesses are only external and do not at all presuppose that either was taken from the other or is an imitation of the other. So far as the star is concerned, it certainly has nothing in common with the pagan superstition with which it is falsely associated.

Other critics have thought that the religion of the sun-god Mithra was not without some influence on the Gospel episode we are studying. To prove this theory, they point to a historical incident that occurred in the year 66 of our era according to Dio Cassius.[280] At the above date a certain Mage, Tiridates by name, came from Armenia to Italy, accompanied by other Magi and three thousand horsemen, who formed a magnificent procession. His avowed purpose was to offer homage to Nero. For nine months he traveled through the regions near the Euphrates in the manner of a *triumphator*. Three of his companions were royal princes. At Naples he had his first audience with the Emperor. Kneeling down before him, he called Nero his lord and adored him. Nero gave great feasts in his honor. On the most solemn of these feasts, Tiridates with his suite advanced before the imperial throne, which had been erected in a public place, and again rendered homage to Nero by prostrating himself upon the ground. Then he said to the Emperor: "Lord, I, the son of Arrakos, . . . am thy slave; I have come to thee as my God, and I adore thee as

rides, *Alex. Sev.*, XIII, 5 f., for Alexander Severus. Cfr. Usenerin Cheyne's *Encyclopedia Biblica*, III, col. 3350 f.; Soltau, *Geburtsgeschichte*, p. 19; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 220; Jeremias, *Babylonisches im N. T.*, p. 50.

[280] LXIII, 1–7; see also Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, XXX, 6; Suetonius, *Nero*, XIII.

Mithra." The historian adds that Tiridates went back to his country by a different route from that which he had followed in coming to Italy.

The parallelism between this event and the visit of the Magi to the Child Jesus is remarkable at first glance. But does it compel us to conclude[281] that St. Matthew's account was invented, with this historic incident as its basis? Most assuredly not. The differences between the two events are so considerable that the hypothesis of the Evangelist's having made use of the visit of Tiridates for his account not only "seems venturesome," [282] but must be wholly rejected, as being more difficult to believe than the historical character of the incidents related by St. Matthew. And so several Liberal theologians openly refuse to adopt it.[283] But we have a still further and more convincing reason: according to Harnack's declaration, the Gospel of St. Matthew had already made its appearance several years before Tiridates set out for Italy to hail Nero's pretended divinity.

3. We have just mentioned Harnack. The judgment that he expresses on the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and on the slaughter of the Innocents is surprising from a critic of such weight. He admits that the first of these events is "perhaps historic," and that the second may have had "an historical nucleus," yet affirms, without offering any proof for his assertion, that a legend may have been formed on the subject of the flight into Egypt and that "we have no means of

[281] Cfr. Dieterich, in the *Zeitschrift für neutestam. Wissenschaft,* 1902, pp. 1–5; Usener, *ibid.,* 1903, pp. 19 f.; Soltau, *Geburtsgeschichte,* p. 19; Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten,* 1908, p. 257; O. Pfleiderer, *Urchristentum,* 2d ed., I, 101; H. Weinel, *Die Stellung vom Urchristentum zum Staat,* 1908, p. 24, etc.

[282] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 77.

[283] J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 220: "We have not the courage to say that St. Matthew's account sprang from this historical incident." See also Cheyne, *Bible Problems,* p. 246; Jeremias, *Babylonisches im N. T.,* p. 55; C. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des N. T.,* p. 233.

passing judgment" on the massacre of the children of Bethlehem.[284] St. Matthew's words count for nothing with this historian. Other Rationalists are even more positive. "As to the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem," says Réville, "which is part and parcel of the Magi legend, it appears to be no more historical than that legend itself. Josephus minutely recounts all the crimes of Herod the Great, and it seems strange that he says nothing of so monstrous a deed." [285]

This time they give us a reason, but it is a purely negative one, an *argumentum e silentio,* whose great weakness we have pointed out, but which our adversaries produce with great readiness, in default of something better.[286] In alleging Josephus' silence on this special point they forget that it is, so to speak, a principle with this historian to observe an almost complete silence in his writings about everything concerning the life of Christ and that, furthermore, he is far from complete even in the matter of the history of his own people.[287] They particularly forget that Josephus furnishes very real, though indirect, testimony to the Evangelist's truthfulness, by setting forth at length Herod's atrocities. Let us quote his general opinion of that despot: "When one looks upon the punishments he inflicted and the injuries he did, not only to his subjects, but to his nearest relations, and takes notice of his severe and unrelenting disposition, one will be forced to allow that he was brutish and a stranger to all humanity . . . If anyone was not very obsequious to him in his language, and would not confess himself to be his slave or but seeming to think of any innovation in his government, he

[284] *Neue Untersuchungen,* p. 105.

[285] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 398.

[286] E. Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 42: "Josephus, who recounts all Herod's crimes, says nothing of this massacre." Cf. K. Hase, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 228; E. Klostermann, *Matthäus,* p. 160, etc.

[287] Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus,* p. 110, note 4.

was not able to contain himself, but prosecuted his very kindred and friends, and punished them as if they were enemies." [288]

Compared with so many crimes,[289] what was the massacre of a few little children, however horrible it might be in itself? A drop in the ocean, it has been called. We can, therefore understand Josephus' passing over this particular crime without mention.[290] Against his silence we can adduce, at least for Christ's sojourn in Egypt, the declaration of the Talmudic calumnies mentioned above.[291] The circumstances are not the same, it is true, for, according to the rabbis, Jesus did not take refuge in Egypt until He attained the years of manhood; but the testimony retains its value as guaranteeing the principal fact.

Moreover, if it be not exact to say that Herod persecuted the Child Jesus and committed the most abominable atrocity in order to rid himself of Him, how did the incidents of the flight into Egypt and the slaughter of the Innocents originate? The critics' repertoire is not very abundant in hypotheses or, as they say, in "motives" accounting for these supposed legends. Once again they have recourse to Jewish and pagan influences, either separately or combined; these are their usual tactics.

Indications of Jewish influence are found even in the lives of Abraham and Moses, as recounted in the rabbinical writings. "This account [of Christ's persecution by Herod] is un-

[288] *Ant.*, XVI, v, 4.

[289] We have mentioned the principal ones *supra,* pp. 127 sqq.

[290] The pagan Macrobius, a Latin grammarian who lived in the sixth century of our era, probably alludes to the Slaughter of the Innocents when he writes in his *Saturnales,* II, 4: "[Augustus] having heard that, among the children under two years of age whom Herod had ordered slain in Syria, was the king's own son, remarked: It is better to be Herod's pig (ὗν) than to be his son (υἱόν)." This is a gross but legitimate play on words.

[291] *Supra,* pp. 8 sq. Cfr. Origen, *Contra Celsum,* I, 38 and III, 1; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 222.

doubtedly the echo of an ancient legend . . . concerning Abraham. King Nimrod had read in the stars the approaching birth of a man who was to destroy his power; and he has all the little children in his empire slain. But, in consequence of a timely warning, Abraham's mother takes to flight and gives birth to her son in a cave." [292]

This "motive" is so far-fetched that it is advanced only by a very small number of critics. According to others, it is "the story of the deliverance of Moses [293] that influenced St. Matthew's account"; [294]—not so much, they add, according to the fabulous amplifications which that event received at the hands of the rabbis and of Flavius Josephus.[295] An Egyptian priest is said to have foretold to the Pharaoh of the time the coming birth of an Israelitic child who would humble Egypt and make his own nation very powerful. Out of fear of this dangerous foe, the Pharaoh orders all the male children of the Jews to be put to death.[296] But one must be badly in need of sound arguments to suppose St. Matthew was inspired by such fables in order to compose a wholly new narrative, one that is, all in all, quite different.[297] For the contrasts are numerous. Thus, for instance, Moses was not brought from Palestine to Egypt, but was born there. It was by thousands that the children of the Hebrews were put to death by Pharaoh's orders, etc.

It has been seen what little solidity this basis has, and the search has turned in another direction, without leaving the realm of Judaism. The Rationalist critics have tried to con-

[292] Giran, *Jésus de Nazareth,* p. 42.

[293] Ex. 2: 1–10.

[294] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* p. 49.

[295] *Ant.,* II, ix, 2.

[296] Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 370; Niebergall, *Jesus im Unterricht,* p. 14; Jeremias, *Das N. Testament im Lichte des alten Orients,* 2d ed., p. 410; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 220, etc.

[297] C. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des N. T.,* p. 235: "Why should such things have been applied to Jesus?"

nect the persecution of Christ by Herod with the account in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, where we see the Messias and His Mother exposed to the hatred of the terrible dragon, who seeks to destroy them. In St. Matthew's narrative, King Herod is supposed to take the place of the dragon of the Apocalypse. This opinion has found not a few followers,[298] and we will return to it presently.

Lastly, we are told that the Evangelist "utilized the prophecy of Osee,[299] without regard for its true meaning." [300] But Osee's prophecy did not contribute any more than did Exodus or the Apocalypse to the composition of the detailed story of Herod's persecution of the Child Jesus. St. Matthew does quote this text and applies it to the Savior when He is brought back from Egypt, but he does so in a typical sense, not literally. We do not see how a passage like this could serve as a theme for the whole series of events that makes up the story of the Magi.

For the flight into Egypt and the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, the Rationalist critics also appeal to mythological influences, especially to the idea, frequently expressed in ancient times, according to which illustrious persons, after being severely persecuted by powerful enemies, were subsequently saved by divine intervention. In this connection, writes Gunkel, "we have a considerable quantity of narratives parallel to the Gospel account." [301] He mentions Cyrus,[302] Romulus and Remus,[303] and Augustus; [304] and concludes by

[298] Cf. Clemen, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–236; J. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 220; Loisy, *op. cit.*, I, 377; Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des N. T.*, pp. 54–58; Feine, *"Ueber babylonische Einflüsse im N. T.,"* in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1906, p. 706, etc.

[299] Osee 11:1: "I called my son out of Egypt." Cfr. Matt. 2:15.

[300] Neumann, *Jesus, wer er geschichtlich war*, p. 65.

[301] *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des N. T.*, p. 69.

[302] According to Herodotus, I, 108.

[303] According to Livy, I, 3.

[304] Suetonius, *Augustus*, 94.

saying: "These parallels furnish decisive proof of the legendary character" of St. Matthew's narrative.[305] And as models for that hostility and that marvelous deliverance, they also cite the Assyrian King Sargon I,[306] the Egyptian god Hathor attacked by Typhon, etc.

Whither would they lead us by this barefaced impudence? What relation is there between these contradictory opinions and the Gospel narrative, which is no more taken from Judaism than it is from pagan mythology? As a matter of fact, these so-called "parallels" do but throw into sharpest relief the unique character of the Christian revelation, always so noble in its simplicity. "The modern theory that the story [of the Magi's visit and its immediate consequences] is a literary fiction, based upon legendary motives and folkloristic analogies, violates every probability." [307]

XXI. The Temple Episode

Although contemporary Rationalists reject the historic character of the Infancy accounts, the Temple episode finds favor with some of them,[308] *e. g.*, Dr. Th. Keim.[309] This we can readily understand because the Temple episode has all the ear-

[305] Strauss had already proposed this parallelism, *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus,* II, 75; likewise E. Renan, *Les Évangiles et la Première Génération Chrétienne,* p. 191. It is also accepted by Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen,* I, 77 f.; Pfleiderer, *Urchristentum,* 2d ed., I, 553 f.; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* p. 197, etc.

[306] See the details and the refutation in Steinmetzer, *Geschichte der Geburt und Kindheit Christi,* pp. 110–115. Inasmuch as certain critics attribute a Babylonian origin to the dragon of the Apocalypse, of which we have just spoken, this Catholic scholar, very well informed on Assyriological questions, shows the unsoundness of the supposed identity. (*Ibid.,* pp. 118–176).

[307] Allen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew,* p. 14.

[308] Among others, we mention O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu,* p. 76, and R. Otto, *Leben und Wirken Jesu,* p. 25. One of the reasons which won their approval is the absence of the miraculous element in this account.

[309] *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 412–417. And also, up to a certain point, K. Hase, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 280.

marks of perfect veracity. The whole story, including Mary's maternal plaint and her astonishment like that of St. Joseph, is wonderfully natural, as is also the presence, among the Jewish doctors, of her Child, whose reserved and quiet habits she knew so well, and His reply with such a depth of meaning.[310] A close and impartial study can discover in the Gospel account nothing but genuine history. There is not a single feature that has the semblance of legend.[311]

But for all that, some critics remain dubious [312] while the great mass of Rationalist theologians solve the question in a frankly negative manner.[313] To justify their opinion, these authors repeat the sophisms that we have already heard more than once. Most of the weapons which they use in attacking the Gospel tradition are borrowed from Strauss. With him [314] they first appeal, according to their custom, to supposed Jewish and pagan "influences," as the basis for the Temple episode. The theme here treated by St. Luke is, they say, met with in the lives of numerous heroes of history or legend, whose character manifests itself in advance in the acts and words of the infant or boy.[315] Moses and Samuel in Jewish literature, Cyrus, Buddha, Augustus, and others in pagan literature, may thus have supplied the idea for the Temple incident. We must be satisfied with briefly replying that this

[310] The radical critics, who regard this incident as a poetical legend, are answered by Beyschlag, himself a semi-Rationalist, as follows: "We would like to know who was the poet of the primitive Church who was capable of inventing the words that form the heart of this account." (*Leben Jesu,* 4th ed., I, 64).

[311] H. Wendt (a Rationalist also), *Die Lehre Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 94: "All these details are stamped with the seal of truth."

[312] A. Réville is one of them (*Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 411): "We would not venture . . . to guarantee its wholly historical character."

[313] See O. Pfleiderer, *Das Urchristentum,* 1887, pp. 425–427; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* 3d ed., p. 323; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 169; J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des N. T.,* I, 400.

[314] *Vie de Jésus,* I, 368–370; *Nouvelle Vie de Jésus,* II, 90–92.

[315] H. J. Holtzmann, *loc. cit.;* J. Weiss, *loc. cit.;* Pfleiderer, *The Early Conceptions of Christianity,* pp. 43–45, etc.

"motive" is too worn out, vague and general to have any force here. Bernhard Weiss was quite right in saying [316] that the critics "torture themselves" in vain looking for Biblical or mythical parallels to this episode. They can find foreign elements in St. Luke's account only on condition that they insert them themselves.

In seeking more specific reasons for questioning the truthfulness of the Temple incident, they adduce the supposed neglectfulness of Mary and Joseph and blame them for the momentary disappearance of the Child. They declare that "the religious exaltation" which urged Christ to remain behind in Jerusalem and in the Temple after His parents' departure, and still more His reply to His mother, are manifest exaggerations. These details are said to be inexplicable from the psychological point of view.[317] We have already refuted these superficial objections in expounding the Gospel account. Some critics manifest surprise at the distress shown by Mary: did she not know who this Child was, and that He ran no risk of being lost? They reason "as if the human heart functioned after the manner of a syllogism." [318]

What, in a sense, is even worse than denying or disputing the historic character of the episode or of the wonderful dictum which it contains, is to completely falsify its import. The Rationalist interpreters see in the Temple incident "one of the events that taught Jesus, that enlightened Him, that hastened the blossoming of His religious consciousness"; [319] or again,

[316] *Leben Jesu,* I, 207, note.

[317] J. Weiss, *Die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas,* 8th ed. (in Meyer's *Kurzgefasster Kommentar*), pp. 341 and 344.

[318] F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de S. Luc,* 2d ed., I, 184.

[319] Stapfer, *Jésus-Christ avant son Ministère,* 2d ed., p. 57. Many Protestant theologians, Liberal and orthodox, speak in the same sense. "It is the hour for the bud, which had been slowly developing and which until then had remained closed, to burst its green envelopes for the first time," wrote J. P. Lange, *Das Evangelium des Lukas,* 3d ed., p. 41. E. W. Beyschlag, *Leben Jesus,* 4th ed., II, 65: "This visit to the Temple awoke in Him something very intimate and lofty, which was slumbering within."

they look upon it as a specimen of His "religious precocity," "a trait of His personal piety," a feature which proves that "the village youth was more attracted by the strict discussions of the doctors of Israel than by the priestly, pompous ceremonial of the Temple . . . Not that He abhors the Temple; but He will be more a man of the synagogue than a devout frequenter of the altar." [320]

But it is especially Christ's words to His mother that the Rationalist critics falsify and distort. According to these critics, Our Lord's words show a spirit of coldness and even insubordination towards His parents.[321] We cannot protest too vigorously against this accusation. The Savior's reply contains nothing contrary to filial devotion. In all simplicity and freedom, should He not have recalled to Mary and Joseph what their anguish seemed to have made them forget for the moment? And, moreover, the Evangelist emphasizes the real spirit of that reply when, to characterize the life of Jesus during the eighteen years of obscurity which he had still to pass at Nazareth, he merely notes this significant detail: "He was subject to them."

The adepts of the Liberal Protestant school have subjected these words of Jesus to a still more serious distortion. In what sense did He affirm that God was His Father? According to them, the word "Father" on His lips at that time had only a general significance. They remind us that various Old Testament passages [322] established between God and the theocratic

[320] A. Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 410. Where did Réville learn this? We note also the contradiction between him and those of his colleagues who attribute the Boy Jesus' feelings to the splendors of the Temple and of the public worship.

[321] Niebergall goes so far as to say, *Jesus im Unterricht,* p. 16: "The future strife of Jesus with His family here already casts its shadow: this is a destiny from which has been spared none of the great personages by whom new paths have been opened."

[322] For example: Ex. 4:22 f.; Deut. 14:1 f.; Jer. 31:9, 20; Osee 11:1; Ecclus. 23:1, 4. Dalmann, *Die Worte Jesu,* I, 151, cites analogous examples from rabbinical literature.

nation paternal relations on the one, and filial on the other side. It is only according to that "Israelitic consciousness" that Jesus designated God as His Father in this passage, we are told. "Ever since this Child learned, on His pious mother's breast, to turn His looks toward the God of Heaven and earth, toward the God of His fathers, He felt Himself the son of that God who enveloped Him with a fatherly love." [323] If a conservative theologian, as the author of this quotation considers himself, uses such language, we may easily surmise what will be the interpretation of the Rationalist critics. Those of them who attribute a historical value to the Temple episode, are unwilling to see in the word "Father" anything more than an allusion to the closeness of the relations between God and Christ, but without the latter in the least thinking to arrogate the divine nature to Himself. We have seen that it is not permissible to weaken or rather to render commonplace at this point the first recorded saying of the Boy Christ, obviously quoted by St. Luke as a striking proof of His growth in wisdom and grace.

XXII. What and How Did the Soul of Christ Know?

The Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities having presented to the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office the following question: May one without fear of error teach the following propositions:

1. It is not certain that the soul of Christ, during His life here below, possessed the knowledge which the blessed possess, by reason of the beatific vision;

2. One may not teach as certain the doctrine according to which the soul of Christ was ignorant of nothing, but from

[323] B. Weiss, *Das Leben Jesu,* I, 269. W. Beyschlag, who belongs to the same semi-Rationalist school, says (*Leben Jesu,* 4th ed., I, 14): "This is in no way . . . an oracle concerning the metaphysical secret of a supernatural origin"; it is simply "the thoroughly naïve expression" of a close relation with God; nothing else.

the beginning knew in the Word all things past, present, and future, *i. e.,* all that God knows by knowledge of vision;

3. The opinion of certain recent writers on the limited character of the knowledge in Christ's soul should not be less favorably received in Catholic schools than the doctrine of the ancients on the universal knowledge with which the soul of Christ was endowed from the beginning;

The Most Eminent Cardinals, inquisitors general in matters of faith and morals, after receiving the opinion of the consultors, have decided that they should answer in the negative (namely: that one may not safely teach the above-quoted propositions).

The following day, Thursday, in the customary audience granted to the Right Reverend Assessor of the Holy Office, a report of the preceding having been presented to His Holiness Benedict XV, His Holiness did approve the decision of the Most Eminent Fathers, confirm it, and order it to be published.

Given at Rome, at the palace of the Holy Office, the 7th day of June, 1918.

XXIII. The Mental and Moral Development of the Child Jesus

Seeing in Our Lord only a man like other men, or granting Him at most only natural qualities of a higher order, that made of Him a remarkable and perhaps unique genius,—a *superman,* according to their barbarous neologism,—the Rationalist critics pretend not to understand that His development must have taken place under extraordinary conditions. Thus, Professor Karl Hase admires Christ's "spiritual," meaning His intellectual and moral, formation. He even finds in it elements which seem to him inexplicable by ordinary methods of education.[324] But he repeats that it consisted of "a

[324] He says, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 292: "[In Jesus] the religious inclina-

purely human development," that "we have no right to regard it as supernatural," that, while "it is at once explicable and inexplicable, natural and marvelous," it remains "in all cases purely human." [325] This theory has been a sort of article of faith for the adepts of Liberal Protestanism or "free Christianity." [326] The leaders of this school,—Keim, Wellhausen, H. J. Holtzmann, A. Harnack, J. Weiss, Jülicher, Auguste Sabatier, Albert Réville, Loisy—and the *critici minores* in their wake, among others, Crooker, A. Carpenter, J. Frenssen, E. Hühn, E. Stapfer, C. Guignebert, are at one in teaching and exploiting it, as a whole and in detail. They differ from one another only by slight shades of opinion.

They are not satisfied with this first, purely negative result, which the Gospel accounts contradict in a most absolute manner by affirming the divinity of Christ, but attempt to reconstruct and thereby to make up for the relative silence of the sacred documents. They have discovered a double means of enlightening themselves on the nature and manner of the Savior's education. In the first place, they apply to the Boy Jesus the general rules that governed the intellectual training of His young compatriots; in the second place, they infer from His adult life what He must have been in the years of His boyhood.[327]

The idea is, to a certain extent, correct, since Christ, as the Gospel narrative presupposes, developed outwardly like other children, like the boys and young men of His country and His time, being distinguished from them only by the total absence of the defects of His age and by the manifestation of more

tion . . . eclipsed every other tendency. Moreover, the conditions of His life were not such as to permit the full flowering of this sort of inclination."

[325] *Ibid.*, p. 299; cfr. Strauss, *Vie de Jésus*, I, 317–320.

[326] A new expression, for some time past quite the fashion, by which the Rationalists designate their party.

[327] Cfr. Crooker, *Supremacy of Jesus*, p. 127; A Réville, *Jésus de Nazareth*, I, 336.

exalted qualities. But the critics notably abuse this double rule: first, by taking no account of the Savior's divine nature and treating Him as a mere man, regardless of the qualities with which they consent to adorn Him; then, sometimes, by entering into details, the prolixity of which is wearisome, even when they are not utterly devoid of a basis in fact.[328]

Let us quote a few passages from the picture which Frenssen, a Protestant minister who became an unbeliever and novelist, paints of the Savior's training and education:[329] "Jesus had remarkably deep eyes enabling Him to take in peaceful and beautiful images from without, and a strong, delicate soul, to reflect unconsciously on those images and to interpret them sweetly and graciously . . .

"With His playmates He went out on the hillsides when the first flowers bloomed. Together, with their hands full of flowers, they would look upon the distant countryside, as far as the sea which stretched away to the west. He saw, white for the harvest, the wheat-field on the side of the hill and, with the other children, He would stand at the door of a house where they were celebrating the marriage of some village maiden. The next morning His mother would tell Him about the maids of honor who had gone through the village during the night with lighted lamps in their hands . . .

"In the fields He helped tie the sheafs; and the thorns mixed in the grain would prick Him . . . He saw shepherds and their herds pass through the village. As the sheep slowly made their way, a shepherd would be heard telling of a recent incident: all night long he had been looking for a stray sheep and had found it in the morning; and his face would light up with joy. Very late that same day a woman who lived close by

[328] But their descriptions often fall far short of deserving to be called scientific. The reader will presently have an opportunity to judge for himself.

[329] In a small work, entitled *Das Leben Jesu dargestellt,* 1907, pp. 10–21, taken from his novel, *Hilligenlei,* 1905, pp. 494–504.

came running to tell that a certain farmer's son, a rakish young fellow who had left his father's roof and the village three years before in a fit of violent anger, was back again. At nightfall this youth stood for hours in the street, clad in his tattered rags, looking at the lighted lamps in his father's house. And what rags!—the neighbor remarked . . .

"Jesus was a timid, cautious child; He kept aloof from others and watched the life about Him with wondering eyes. Of course, He played with other children; but often He used to leave His group of playmates in spite of Himself, so to speak, as if some invisible being had come to Him and said: Come aside for a moment. Then the Child's eyes became more and more fixed; a thick veil covered them. But His soul was not darkened . . . Then His playmates came and awakened Him, saying to one another: Jesus is dreaming again: see how He dreams! Then He would rejoin the other children, His eyes still troubled with sweet memories, His features slightly drawn with sadness."

Frenssen goes on in this vein for six pages more, taking us through the school and synagogue with Christ. "With stern and gloomy brow" the presiding officer read aloud the ten commandments of God. "The good boy listened, frightened, and could not understand. But he recovered His serenity when they read the holy annals and spoke of the heroes of Israel, of its prophets, and its future liberator. Then was His young heart filled with a lofty, holy delight." He pondered upon these thoughts far into the night, "and fell asleep happy, with kindling eyes."

This same author also shows us Christ in the bosom of His family: "On the doorstep and at the fireside, with a loving, wide-open soul, He listened to what His parents and neighbors believed and imagined about ancient times: about God, who lives with a great many good angels in the blue sky above, and about the devil, who lives there also, but in the darkest

corner, behind the heavy gray clouds . . . Bad angels are around him in great numbers. God and His angels, the devil and his angels, are coming down and going up day and night, mingling for good and for ill in man's destiny. Every sickness and every mental aberration is the work of the bad angels . . . In the insane man who lives at the other end of the town, there dwell seven angels and evil spirits, making him utter wild cries."

It was in this way, we are told, that the ideas of His time, whether true or false, entered the mind of the Boy Christ one by one: "Up to His last mortal hour He neither rejected nor mistrusted any detail of the faith or superstition of His race." Later on He learned the carpenter's trade. His work took Him outside of Nazareth, which He had never left before, and new details of knowledge entered His mind. "He went as far as the seacoast, where He saw the boats of the pearl divers riding on the waves; the trader was there with his leathern purse, waiting for the result of the catch." He journeyed through Palestine and heard the complaints against the rapacity of Herod, the tetrarch; He saw the pillaging soldiers and the thieving publicans. At Jerusalem He beheld the abuses that had entered the sanctuary, thanks to the connivance of the priests. Thus was His education acquired. His countrymen looked upon Him in astonishment, and not without misgiving. "He Himself knew not what was passing within Him. He was a poor child, full of unrest, now rejoicing, now saddened in some indescribable way, a child of man agitated by divine thoughts as by violent griefs, a genius being trained in anguish." A genius? No, not even that; but a simple "dreamer." [330]

And these descriptions are called a reconstruction of the Savior's development and education! How wonderful these

[330] This expression is to be found frequently under the pen of Frenssen, to designate Christ's inner nature.

critics are! They reject the most indisputable facts of the Gospel and would have us accept their personal lucubrations as genuine coin of the realm. They carry psychology to excess, connecting with Christ's childhood and youth all His parables and most of His sayings, as though it were impossible for him to invent anything whatsoever later in life. This surely is a curious method, serving as a pretext for repeated literary efforts that are usually rather flat.[331]

We much prefer to all these tirades and descriptions the simple declaration of J. Weiss, who frankly confesses his ignorance: [332] "We have no possible means of spying (so to speak) on Christ's development."

Does this mean that the method just mentioned must be absolutely condemned? Again we say, no. We have already shown that, if employed properly, it throws some light on the mind and soul of Our Lord during the period of His formation. But the Rationalists abuse the method, because they speak as if the God-Man had been educated and had developed after the manner of simple mortals.

It may be profitable to mention a few special details on which the critics most often insist. In concluding his description of Nazareth and its surroundings, Ernest Renan writes: "Nature, at once smiling and majestic, was Christ's whole education." [333] So strange is this assertion that its author in-

[331] Stapfer, former professor in the Protestant Faculty of Paris, uses this method extensively in the volume entitled, *Jésus-Christ avant son Ministère.* He supposes that nothing has changed in Palestine and that whatever takes place among the poor classes and among the Arab peasants, took place in the same manner at Nazareth and among the Jews in general. On this background he creates designs according to his own fancy and composes, on our Lord's education, a novel which he claims was actually lived. The whole contemporary history of the Jews and a considerable part of the rabbinical theology of that time pass before our eyes, in connection with the instruction which our Lord is supposed to have received and in connection with the "mixture of truths and errors" with which His mind "was at first impregnated" (p. 51).

[332] *Die Schriften des N. T.*, I, 36.

[333] *Vie de Jésus,* 1st ed., p. 30.

directly disavows it a few pages later,[334] unaware that he is contradicting himself: "Hillel," he says, "was the real teacher of Christ." [335] Nor is this second declaration any better founded than the first, as Professor Franz Delitzsch proves in an interesting pamphlet.[336] Karl Hase, too, advances a groundless hypothesis when he says: "It is probable that Jesus utilized all the schools and all the means of education of His time, so far as they were within His reach." [337] But have we not heard [338] His fellow-countrymen declare that He never followed the classes of the doctors? Albert Réville, after quite mistakenly mentioning "the first infatuation [of Jesus] for the Scribes of Jerusalem" on the occasion of the Temple episode, thought it necessary to add that this zeal, "as the years of discernment came to Him, grew cold under the blow of that experience, so painful to His big heart, which legal rigorism too frequently covered with unworthy digressions . . . and assuredly there was little real religion in the punctilious pedantry with which these doctors so minutely dissected the practice of religion by the people subject to their influence." [339]

Again we say with all possible emphasis: Jesus owed nothing to the Scribes.

For a while it was fashionable to regard our Lord, in this matter of His education, as more or less indebted to some one of the three famous sects which then existed among the Jews: those of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. But, after being subjected to a careful examination, this opinion soon appeared so devoid of real foundation that to-day it barely counts a few followers.[340] As Strauss ac-

[334] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[335] Hillel, one of the most famous Jewish doctors, lived in the reign of Herod, a short time before the birth of Christ.

[336] *Jesus und Hillel,* 2d ed., 1867.

[337] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 300.

[338] John 7: 15.

[339] *Jésus de Nazareth,* I, 424 f.

[340] Stapfer is one of them, at least partially, in his book cited above (n. 331),

knowledges:[341] "The Pharisees, whom Christ so powerfully attacked later on, cannot be regarded as exerting any influence on Him, except negatively, by the revulsion which their legalistic pedantry and hypocrisy inspired . . . We must, therefore, hold to the view that the influence of the Pharisaic sect on Christ's development was essentially negative."

The Savior knew their pernicious doctrines thoroughly; we see this from the Sermon on the Mount, from His well-founded invectives,[342] from His perpetual strife with their principles, so destructive of true religion. Between the Pharisees and Him there was an antagonism on almost every matter; they were not His teachers.

The Sadducees constituted chiefly a political party, the party of the priestly caste.[343] Rather skeptical in religious matters, they early joined hands with Christ's worst enemies and had no less a hand in His death than the Pharisees. It is clearly established that His intellectual growth took place entirely without help from them.

"Frequent attempts have been made to show a connection between Christ and a certain group of pious men, . . . whom we know by the name of Essenes."[344] Particularly toward the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century there were efforts[345] to make Our Lord out to be a full-fledged Essene. The basis for this opinion was in certain outward resemblances between His teaching and conduct and that of the Essenes, for example, the forbidding of oaths, community of goods as practiced by Our Lord and His dis-

where he speaks of Jesus as if He had been a disciple of the Pharisees and Essenes in His youth.

[341] *Vie de Jésus*, I, 320.

[342] Matt. chap. 23.

[343] Cfr. Acts 5:17.

[344] Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 17.

[345] See Fillion, *Les Étapes du Rationalisme*, pp. 28 f., 31, 32 f., 88.

ciples, the praise of celibacy, etc. But the differences are so essential and the similarities are so superficial that this opinion, forcefully attacked by the leaders of Liberal Protestantism, is almost entirely abandoned to-day. "Jesus could not have had any connection with the Essenes," Dr. Harnack wrote lately.[346] And he further says: "These latter carefully avoided, not only those who were unclean (according to the law), but even men who were somewhat lax. For this reason they lived apart from other men, performing numerous ablutions every day. In the case of Jesus we find the complete opposite of this sort of life. He seeks for sinners and eats with them. This fundamental difference alone shows us that He was far removed from the Essenes. His aim and His means were entirely different from theirs."

Hence it follows, as many of the Rationalists are ready to admit, that we need not look in Our Lord's discourses for an echo of the theology or of the sects of His time. He never had anything in common with them. But may He not in His youth have felt other Jewish influences than those we have just passed in review? Many critics think so and assert that Christ let Himself be more or less dominated by the "apocalyptic current" which "was then so strong among the people." [347] Renan formulated this opinion,[348] which, as we have proved elsewhere, is mistaken.[349] According to Stapfer the Savior "was able to take from those writings statements of truth which

[346] *Das Wesen des Christentums,* 1903, p. 21. See also Strauss, *Vie de Jésus,* I, 322; K. Hase, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 293; T. Keim, *Gechichte Jesu von Nazara,* I, 438–440; Bousset, *Jesus,* p. 18, etc.

[347] H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen im Leben Jesu,* p. 109. In the same sense, see O. Schmiedel, *Die Hauptprobleme des Leben Jesu,* 2d ed., pp. 67–75; W. Baldensperger, *Die messianisch-apokalyptischen Hoffnungen des Judentums,* 2d ed., *passim;* J. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu von Reiche Gottes,* 2d ed., and especially A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede,* pp. 221–256, 347–395.

[348] *Vie de Jésus,* p. 37: "Perhaps he also read the Book of Henoch, at that time revered on a par with the Sacred Books, and the other writings of the same sort, which so powerfully stirred the popular imagination."

[349] *Les Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 275–287.

they contained";[350] but even this is saying too much. The same author further remarks, and very truly: "How foreign to Christ's mind is the fantastic, exaggerated manner of all those apocalyptical visions . . . What a distance separates His simple, popular teaching, with its imagery of figures that are always peaceful and coherent, from the figures in those books, with their false symbolism and curious extravagance!" Jesus certainly took nothing from those unhealthy sources.

But, Strauss[351] asks, were there not some non-Jewish, extra-Palestinian elements that exerted an influence on Christ during His hidden life in such a way as to broaden His mental horizon and to develop and supplement His stock of ideas? Again the reply is in the negative, and rightly so, for the most minute examination of Christ's life and teaching does not enable us to discover the least trace of elements of that sort. Karl Hase[352] also says that there is no historical foundation for sending "the young man of Nazareth" to all sorts of non-Jewish schools and to suppose they contributed in some way to His intellectual training. We may say without fear of contradiction that every attempt to connect Christ's development with Hellenism (especially with the philosophy of Alexandria), with Buddhism, with Parseeism, etc., has completely failed.[353] One of the most influential representatives of the Liberal school says: "It can be confidently affirmed that Christ, in His development, was subject to no direct influence from the extra-Palestinian world, whether of Buddha or Plato, of Philo or his predecessors."[354]

We have spoken of the influence which the reading of the Sacred Books and meditating on them may have exercised on the mind and soul of the Savior during His life of retirement

[350] *Jésus-Christ avant son Ministère*, p. 110.
[351] *Vie de Jésus*, I, 332 f.
[352] *Geschichte Jesu*, 2d ed., p. 293.
[353] We refer the reader to our *Étapes du Rationalisme*, pp. 296–319.
[354] H. von Soden, *Die wichtigsten Fragen*, p. 108.

at Nazareth. But in this matter, too, the critics have indulged in great exaggerations. "The basis of Christ's intellectual development was in the Sacred Scriptures of His race," says Strauss,[355] whose followers have not failed to repeat this view. Karl Hase, for example, says: "The Holy Scriptures deeply studied . . . from the patriarchs to the last of the prophets, such was the sacred soil on which the spiritual formation of Jesus took place." [356] These critics can even tell us which parts of the Bible Christ relished most and which displeased, nay, repelled Him. "From the Scriptures He selected what was a special nourishment for His soul, and He found His favorite passages in that variegated garden of delights. First in the Psalms and in Isaias. In Isaias: not however where he is the preacher of the terrible judgment or where he speaks as the herald of the future king;[357] but rather where there is question of the Anointed One of the Spirit, of the Evangelist of the poor . . . Jeremias, as a preacher of penance and piety of heart, acted powerfully on Him, Osee and Malachias appear in His preaching: Zacharias and Daniel also, when that same preaching draws to a close. All these writers, no less than the historical books, to which His speech refers more rarely, inspired in Him a deep faith in the almighty and all-wise God, who guided His people." [358]

What a one-sided human way of judging Christ and His development! The Catholic commentator, who relishes the Bible and its inspired treasures in a different manner from that of the Rationalist theologians, sees in it, as much as anyone else, the most perfect instrument of education that the world has ever possessed. But he is not unaware that he would be committing an enormous mistake in attributing to it an

[355] *Vie de Jésus,* I, 319.

[356] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., 289.

[357] Naturally the Rationalist writers make the Savior into their own likeness; they transform Him into a critic and skeptic.

[358] P. W. Schmidt, *Die Geschichte Jesu erzählt,* p. 55.

exclusive or preponderant influence in the Savior's formation.

Thus, then, the fact remains that the milieu in which Our Lord lived before manifesting Himself to the world is incapable of explaining His marvelous growth. Our opponents recognize this at times as well as we. One of them thus sums up their views: "Jesus reached manhood as a member of the Jewish people and as a son of His time. However, even the most perfect acquaintance with the circumstances of Jewish life in those days, in the midst of which Jesus grew up, is not sufficient to explain His nature completely. It is a mistake to deny that in some way He felt the influence of His surroundings; but, on the other hand, we must resolutely reject the opinion that Jesus was merely a product of His period." [359]

Let us accept this confession, imperfect though it is. The milieu in which Jesus grew up could, by God's help, form a Jewish prophet, a saint of the Old Covenant, a son of Moses and of the law; not, however, Jesus, the God-Man, the ideal and transcendent Man. According to Dr. Fairbairn's happy distinction,[360] the agencies and influences under which Our Lord developed were not creative or constitutive, but only occasional or conditional. His personality was too superior a product to be the work of a mere empirical factor.[361]

XXIV. The Mother of Jesus

Protestantism at first preserved the essential parts of the Christology of the Catholic Church, but rejected the cult of Mary. Nearly all its members, even those called orthodox, have remained faithful to that rule. Not long ago one of them wrote: "Faith in Mary is one of the dividing points, where the

[359] E. Huhn, *Geschichte Jesu*, p. 13.

[360] *Studies in the Life of Christ*, 13th ed., p. 58.

[361] Sanday, *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*, p. 98, remarks: "We hesitate to think of Him as dependent on internal and external impressions quite in the same degree and kind as we are."

paths of Protestantism and Catholicism permanently separate." [362] We can, therefore, foretell the avowed Rationalists' attitude. Not only do they make Mary out to be an ordinary woman, not only do they treat her as though she had fallen far short of her historic mission, but they even charge her with having been an adversary of her Son, with not having believed in Him, and with having more than once obstructed His ministry. Therefore, they say, Christ ignored her, so to speak, and even treated her harshly on several occasions, thus condemning Catholic "Mariolatry" in advance.

Ernest Renan, without naming the Blessed Virgin, directs at her a goodly share of the reproaches which he addresses to the Savior's family. He says: [363] "Legend is wont to show Jesus in His childhood as rebelling against paternal authority.[364] It is certain at least that relationship counted but little with Him. His family seems not to have loved Him and at times we find Him cold towards them. Like all men wholly wrapped up in an idea, Jesus came to take little account of the ties of blood."

Karl Hase [365] distinguishes a threefold image of Mary in the Gospels: the historic, the legendary, and the one idealized by the Church. They resemble superimposed layers. The historic form, the only true one, places before our eyes a mother who does not understand her Son nor His Messianic work. The legendary form is that which we see in the first two chapters of St. Luke. "In the Church's idealization, the Virgin Mother becomes the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, with a crown of stars about her head and the dragon beneath her feet." But "the history and the ideal are opposed to each

[362] Zöckler, in the *Real-Encyklopädie für protest. Theologie und Kirche,* 3d ed., XII, 336.

[363] *Vie de Jésus,* 1863, p. 42.

[364] A footnote refers us to Luke 2:42.

[365] *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 268.

other." [366] Frenssen is even less restrained in speaking of the Mother of Christ. "She saw her children grow up," he says,[367] "and that did not turn to her glory. It is a strange but certain fact that this woman, the mother of a hero, did not understand the intellectual nobility of her child."

Justification for such accusations is sought in words which Christ uttered on four different occasions. We have already heard the first ones, at the time of the Temple episode,[368] and we saw that only by a most arbitrary interpretation do they contain anything that would let us suppose that any coldness or misunderstanding prevailed between the Child Jesus and His parents.[369] In the proper time and place we shall have to explain the other three sayings at which the critics affect to be scandalized, and without difficulty we shall see that neither have they the meaning imposed on them by sheer violence. Suffice it to quote them here. The second one in chronological order is recorded by St. John,[370] on the occasion of the miracle of Cana. "They have no wine," said Mary to Her Son; she wished to save their hosts from being grievously humiliated. "Woman, what is that to me and to thee? My hour is

[366] H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker,* p. 31, places to St. Luke's special credit "whatever, in the accounts of the Infancy, serves to elevate and celebrate Mary, as the Virgin Mother of the Son of God. Her divine glorification begins with Luke." Similarly, Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu,* 4th ed., II, 50; also Keim, *Geschichte Jesu,* I, 331 f.

[367] *Das Leben des Heilands dargestellt,* p. 10. Still grosser blasphemies are expressed by Soltau in his book, *Das Fortleben des Heidentums in der altchristlichen Kirche,* pp. 101 f.

[368] Luke 2:49.

[369] We wonder how an orthodox Protestant theologian like Nebe could write: "In the Temple, Jesus had a triumph such as no other child ever had. The masters in Israel were most heartily pleased with Him; the looks of all were turned upon Him with growing admiration, when His mother suddenly interrupted with chiding words. If this Child had not been the gentle, humble, obedient Jesus, an extremely disagreeable scene would have taken place in God's sanctuary." (*Die Kindheitsgeschichte Christi,* p. 412.)

[370] John 2:4.

not yet come," He replied. But His hour came almost immediately, and, at His mother's request, He changed the water into wine. On a later occasion, when Our Lord was preaching to a numerous audience, He was told that His Mother and His brethren wished to speak to Him. But He said: "Who is my Mother and who are my brethren?" Then, casting his eye over the ranks of his hearers, He says: "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." [371] About that same time a Jewish woman, made enthusiastic by the Savior's preaching, raised her voice and exclaimed: [372] "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck"; and Jesus said: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it!"

These four utterances of the Divine Master are all of the same sort. They proclaim that, comparatively speaking, He had to keep a certain independence with regard to His relatives, when there was question of His Messianic rôle. But we do not see in what way those utterances would have wounded the filial devotion which He owed to His Mother, a devotion which He always showed so tenderly, even to His last breath. Furthermore, the two last mentioned were addressed less to Mary than to all the persons present, whom, according to His common practice, He sought to raise to loftier moral planes. On this subject, one of the apocryphal Gospels [373] contains a speck of gold, such as referred to by St. Jerome.[374] It quotes Our Lord as saying: "Never have I pained my parents." Moreover, although Mary did not always fully understand the mysteries of her Son's life, because God had not revealed all its details to her in advance, her faith in Him did not waver for

[371] Matt. 12: 46–50; cfr. Mark 3: 31–35; Luke 8: 19–21.

[372] Luke 11: 27 f. On these texts see Bartmann, *Christus ein Gegner des Marienkultus? Jesus und seine Mutter in den heiligen Evangelien*, 1909.

[373] *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, XI.

[374] See page 349.

a single moment and never underwent the slightest shadow of doubt. How would that have been possible, since she was so intimately associated with His life and since, from the very first, she understood His divine nature and His mission as Redeemer?

In contrast with numerous affronts from the pens of Rationalist and heterodox theologians, we cite the following testimonies, which honor the Protestant writers who express them. Alexander Whyte[375] says that whatsoever virtue a woman ever possessed cannot rightly be refused to Mary. The divine fitness of things forces him to believe that all the graces which a woman can receive and all the fine qualities she can acquire will have to be accorded to her who was predestined to bear in her womb the Holy Infant, to nourish Him and to instruct Him familiarly. He says further that Mary must be given everything to which she has a right, and that we need not fear having too lofty an idea of her virtues. Alfred Resch, writes: "The unique physiognomy of the pure and chaste Virgin Mary, the pious and humble servant of the Lord, appears to us in the Gospels, especially in the Gospel of the Infancy, under an aspect so concrete, so historical, so true, that, if the sacred narratives did not exist, no human imagination would have been able to create it." [376]

XXV. The Brothers of Christ

The Rationalist critics and a large number of moderate Protestants accept and repeat Helvidius' theory on the subject of the "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus.[377] To the argu-

[375] *Expositor,* February, 1885, p. 125.

[376] *Kindheitsevangelium,* p. 324.

[377] See Hase, *Geschichte Jesu,* 2d ed., p. 67; E. Reuss, *Histoire Évangélique,* p. 137; Loisy, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques,* I, 291, and *Quelques Lettres,* p. 155; Maurenbrecher, *Weihnachtsgeschichten,* p. 6; S. Reinach, *Orpheus,* p. 329: "The idea that these brothers and sisters were cousins or children of a former marriage

ments which we advanced against this theory when we were considering the perpetual virginity of the mother of Christ, we will add this simple remark. If, after Christ's birth, Mary had had four sons, at least two of whom, James and Jude, held important places in the early Church, how did it happen that tradition, so early and with such tenacity, accepted the belief in her perpetual virginity? The facts would have been there to belie such a tradition and reduce it to nothing. Yet we see it clearly attested in the second century, when a certain number of the *Desposyni,* or relatives of the Savior, were still alive. Insurmountable obstacles would have arisen in the face of such a legend. So true is this that the most famous French skeptic of the nineteenth century, Ernest Renan, who at first pronounced in favor of Helvidius' error,[378] later on [379] perceived that this position was untenable. He recognized that it is not probable that the brothers and sisters in question "were the sons or daughters of Mary." He insisted upon this excellent proof: "In His youth Jesus at Nazareth was called the Son of Mary . . . This presupposes that for a considerable time He was known as the only son of a widow. Such appellations are employed only when the father is no longer alive and the widow has no other son."

With St. Jerome [380] we may add that the Evangelists had a perfect right to use the word "brothers" in a broad sense, since they did not hesitate to give St. Joseph the title of father, after saying again and again, in various forms, that the Savior's birth was absolutely supernatural.

It is objected that in most of the passages where the "broth-

of Joseph, is a subtlety of theologians"; Pfanmüller, *Jesus im Urteil der Jahrhunderte,* p. 6; B. Weiss, *Leben Jesu,* I, 270 f. Origen grieved to see that several Christians of his day temerariously attributed to Mary other children besides Jesus. (*Comment. in Matth.,* 10: 17).

[378] *Vie de Jésus,* 1863, pp. 23–25; *Vie de Jésus,* 1870, p. 11.

[379] *Les Évangiles et la Seconde Génération Chrétienne,* p. 542.

[380] *Adv. Helvid.,* 16.

ers" of Jesus are mentioned by the Evangelists,[381] Mary is named along with them, or is at the time personally present. In accordance with ancient authors this fact may be explained by saying that after the death of Cleophas—father of James, Joseph, Simon, Jude, and their sisters—his wife and children came to live in the house of Joseph and Mary; or it may be supposed that, after Joseph's death, the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son retired to the home of her sister or of her sister-in-law. A still simpler explanation is that, after Jesus left her and began His ministry, Mary sought the hospitality of Cleophas' home. Under these conditions we can easily understand that she would often have been accompanied by her nephews, particularly when going to rejoin her Son.

As for the fact that some of Our Lord's relatives did not believe in His mission, St. John points it out in terms too clear to leave room for doubt: "Neither did his brethren believe in him." [382] Because of this lack of faith, they indulged in severe criticism of His conduct and wished to impose their own will on Him.[383] One day His relatives [384] even attempted to seize Him, on the pretext that He had lost His mind.[385] Jesus Himself seems to allude to this hostile attitude when He says to His fellow-citizens of Nazareth: "A prophet is not without honor but in his own country and in his own house and among his own kindred." [386] It is true that His loving, delicate soul must have suffered much on this account. But it would be wrong to conclude from St. John's statement that none of Our Lord's relatives believed in Him. In matter of fact, at the period of which the Evangelist is speaking, two of the Savior's

[381] Matt. 12:46 f.; 13:35 f.; Mark 3:31 f.; 6:3; Luke 8:19 f.; John 2:12.

[382] John 7:5.

[383] John 7:2 f.

[384] Mark 3:21. This time the "brothers" are not directly named; the Evangelist uses the more general expression *οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ*.

[385] We shall explain this incident further on.

[386] Mark 6:4.

"brothers," James and Jude, were members of the Apostolic College. As we said above, Christ probably had other cousins and relatives besides those whose names are preserved by St. Matthew and St. Mark, and it is by no means certain that His closest relatives were moved by feelings of jealousy, dislike, or disbelief towards Him.[387] Moreover, the author of the Acts of the Apostles shows us[388] the "brothers of Jesus" in the upper room with His mother Mary, in company with the Apostles, disciples, and the holy women, awaiting the descent of the Holy Ghost after the Ascension. Hence it follows that the great miracle of the Resurrection must have put an end to their former doubts.

XXVI. The Human Nature of Christ

A priori it would seem that the Rationalists, who refuse to believe in Christ's divinity and see in Him a mere man, however exceptionally endowed, ought to be very exact in speaking of His human nature, particularly His mental and moral qualities. They certainly are much occupied with Jesus and His personality. One of them writes: "The question *'What was Jesus?'* more powerfully engages the attention of men of our generation than perhaps of any other. . . . Men's minds are turned toward Jesus more than ever."[389] To a considerable extent this is true. Unfortunately the view which the critics obtain is made up of many false impressions. One is

[387] The Rationalist theologian G. Volkmar, one of the leading members of the Tübingen school (*Jesus Nazarenus und die erste christliche Zeit,* p. 32), gives a curious reason for these sorry views: "It is quite comprehensible that, in a house where rude manual labor was engaged in to earn the daily bread, a solitary thinker would soon have aroused astonishment and would have passed for a dreamer who produced nothing; then the traditional piety would be scandalized at his piety, burning as a volcano [!]; lastly, his claims to be the savior of the people would have seemed simply incomprehensible."

[388] Acts 1 : 14.

[389] Wernle, *Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu,* p. 1.

sadly deceived upon examining the portraits which they draw of Him. Even from the purely human point of view, they have for the most part distorted His image, under the influence of prejudices, sometimes even of a pronounced antipathy. What an unrecognizable Jesus is that of Strauss, Renan, Keim, Albert Réville, Loisy, Harnack, Bousset, J. Weiss, and many others! Since His divine nature is inseparably united to His human nature, it is impossible to transform Jesus into a simple mortal without taking from Him the most essential part of His personality. The arbitrary fashion of suppressing numerous passages of the Gospels, according to the Rationalist method, on the pretext that they were written under the exaggerated inspiration of faith or of enthusiastic love, leaves us only a distorted Jesus.

True the Rationalists of all shades of opinion have a habit of praising the Savior. But generally their praises are mere "literary compositions," empty declamations, designed to soften the unfavorable impression produced by their subversive theories. According to their own account of themselves, they are "the men of Jesus," [390] His most loyal defenders, who seek to free Him from the trammels and false ornaments with which early Christianity has encompassed Him. They extol Him as "the most important personality of history," [391] as the valiant hero who draws us into His own life and His own essence, as "the realization of our religious ideal, the glory of humanity, the voice which God makes us hear." [392]

In addition to this general idea, we wish to point out only a small number of details, some of which refer to the Savior's

[390] Frenssen, *Das Leben des Heilands*, p. 97.

[391] Auguste Sabatier, in Lichtenberger's *Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses*, VII, 341.

[392] A. Meyer, *Was uns Jesus heute ist*, p. 33. This is the obligatory refrain that R. von Delius sings with melodramatic affectation in a small work, *Jesus, sein Kampf, seine Persönlichkeit und seine Legende*, 1909, pp. 105–125. See also our *Étapes du Rationalisme*, pp. 206–209.

knowledge, others to His moral traits. No Rationalist seriously entertains the thought of denying Christ's rare qualities of mind. We have observed that the leaders of the critical school have no hesitation in admiring with us His keenness of observation, the fitness of His replies, His brilliant imagination, the vigor of His argumentation. We have also drawn attention to a grave error of the Liberal theologians, which consists in affirming that Christ's mental faculties were developed and His ideas formed just as ours are, under the influence of the environment in which He lived.

Several advanced Liberals go much farther and do not blush to consider Jesus Christ not merely as a fanatic and a visionary,[393] but as a fool, nay, a madman. They have even attempted to offer a proof for this hateful blasphemy in special works, which have rightly provoked contempt and disgust.[394]

There are also members of the so-called ultra-radical Protestant school who, with still more sacrilegious audacity, question the Savior's moral character. Let us ignore their hateful calumnies.[395] Taken as a whole, the critics show themselves respectful toward Christ's moral personality. But they make the mistake of supposing that His qualities and virtues were in a state of perpetual growth, like a chrysalis that is gradually changing until it becomes a complete insect of its kind.[396] They also teach that the Savior was endowed with an eminent holiness and that He never sinned. "Only one sentiment was lacking in His life," writes Auguste Sabatier,[397] "that of repentance; His conscience never received a wound." A Rationalist, blinded by prejudice,[398] sought to deduce from certain Gospel

[393] Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu,* II, 8 f.; O. Holtzmann, *War Jesus Ekstatiker?* 1903; J. Baumann, *Die Gemütsart Jesu,* 1908.

[394] See our *Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 243, 257.

[395] We have given some samples in the same volume of *Les Étapes du Rationalisme,* pp. 245–247.

[396] We have shown that their development was only external and apparent.

[397] Lichtenberger's *Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses,* VII, 368.

[398] C. Schrempf, *Menschenlos,* 1900, p. 75.

passages, particularly from the parable of the Prodigal Son, that Jesus was able to employ such exact and touching language only because He had personally experienced sin; but a more reasonable critic [399] very justly replied that the pure and innocent soul of Our Lord could very well take account of the wretchedness of a guilty life, the while itself remaining perfectly holy. And so we have been painfully surprised to read the following remark in a work which in general contains beautiful thoughts about the Savior's character and loudly proclaims His moral superiority: [400] "Who would be able to affirm that Jesus was certain of having been free from sin throughout His life, from childhood?" Jesus Himself answered that question when He said to His fellow-citizens: *"Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?"* [401] His Heavenly Father placed His seal on the assertion by that solemn declaration, twice repeated: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [402]

[399] O. Frommel, *Die Poesie des Evangeliums Jesu,* pp. 122–224.
[400] J. Ninck, *Jesus als Charakter,* p. 248.
[401] John 8:46.
[402] Matt. 3:17; 17:5.

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